A4950-29F 7/6-90

DINNERTIME USA

1989

FMI
FOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE

Better Homes and Gardens

DINNERTIME USA

1989

Conducted for Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens Magazine
by Total Research Corporation

FOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE

Better Homes and Gardens.

Copyrighted 1989
by Food Marketing
Instutute and
Better Homes and
Gardens Magazine
Printed in U.S.A.

Published jointly by:
The Research Department
Food Marketing Institute
1750 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
and
The Research Department
Better Homes and Gardens
750 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Price: $30.00

DINNERTIME U.S.A.

Table of Contents

Page

Introduction 1

Highlights 3

Charts 9

Attitudes Toward Dinner Together 17

Table A*—Frequency of Dinner Together 19
Table B*—Who Prepares Meals 21
Table C*—How Often Dinner Prepared 23
Table 1—Importance of Eating Together 25
Table 2—Why Eating Together is Important 27
Table 3—How Often Would Like to Eat Together 29
Table 4—Events that Would Increase Dinner Frequency 31
Table 5—How Frequently Dinner Together Two Years Ago 33
Table 6—Why Dinner Together More Often Two Years Ago 35
Table 7—Dinner Together Two Years from Now 37

Dinner Environment and Dynamics 39

Table 8—Eating Together at the Same Time 41
Table 9—Household Members Present 43
Table 10—Guests Present 45
Table 11—Eating at Home vs. Out, Special Occasions 47
Table 12—Conversation at Dinner 49
Table 13—Atmosphere of the Meal 51
Table 14—Enjoyment of Dinner 53
Table 15—Eating in the Same Room 55
Table 16—Requirement During the Week 57
Table 17—Requirement on the Weekend 59
Table 18—Entertainment During Dinner 61
Table 19—Level of TV Viewing 63
Table 20—Duration of Dinner 65

* These tables were used to screen respondents

Serving Habits at Dinnertime........67

Table 21—Serving Location........69
Table 22—Serving Habits........71
Table 23—Type of Plates Used........73
Table 24—Type of Utensils Used........75
Table 25—Type of Napkins Used........77
Table 26—Type of Table Covering Used........79
Table 27—Type of Table Decorations Used........81
Table 28—Number of Main Dishes Served........83

Dinner Menu........85

Table 29—First Course or Appetizer Served........87
Table 30—Type of Food Served for Main Dish........89
Table 31—Other Food Served with Main Dish........91
Table 32—Beverages Served During the Meal........93
Table 33—Dessert Served at the End of the Meal........95
Table 34—Beverages Served at the End of the Meal........97
Table 35—Type of Food Used in Preparing Dinner........99
Table 36—Canned Products Used in Preparing Dinner........101
Table 37—Frozen Packaged Foods Used in Preparing Dinner........103
Table 38—Type of Food Served for a Quick Dinner........105
Table 39—Where Likely to Get Food for a Quick Dinner........107
Table 40—How Meat is Prepared for a Quick Dinner........109

Dinner Preparation Basics........111

Table 41—Time Spent Preparing Dinner........113
Table 42—Recipe Usage in Preparing Dinner........115
Table 43—Home Appliance Ownership........117
Table 44—Primary Member Who Decided What to Eat........119
Table 45—Other Household Member(s) Who Helped Decide What to Eat........121
Table 46—Primary Meal Preparer........123
Table 47—Other Household Member(s) Who Helped Prepare the Dinner........125
Table 48—Household Members Who Set the Table........127
Table 49—Household Members Who Cleared away the Dishes After the Meal........129
Table 50—Household Members Who Washed the Dishes and/or Loaded the Dishwasher........131
Table 51—Leaving the Table at the End of the Meal........133

Methodology........135

Sampling Variation........136

Demographic Profile of Respondents........137

Introduction

The questions "What's happening at American dinner tables?" and "What importance do Americans attach to dinner?" prompted this Dinnertime USA study. Dinnertime USA is the second of five annual surveys commissioned by Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens to explore the changing role of food in family life.

This study is the result of 750 interviews with respondents who met the following criteria:

- Two or more people living full-time in the household.
- Household members eat together at least three times per week.
- Respondent the main meal preparer or shares the responsibility equally with another household member.
- Respondent prepares dinner for the household at least once a month.

Questions in this study ask both what happened at the last dinner at home and about attitudes toward eating dinner together.

Additional studies are available. Supermarket personnel may obtain these from the Food Marketing Institute and manufacturers from Better Homes and Gardens.

Special Notes

All charts are based on the 750 interviews or a subsample noted on the chart. The percentages shown in each table are calculated on the base number noted. These percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple response.

In the text, when percentages are noted for a respondent, it is assumed that the survey participant is speaking for his or her household only. Percentages with the percent sign running down are to be read across; those with the percent sign running across are to be read down.

For more specific information on the study, the methodology, respondent profile, sampling tolerances and survey questionnaire are found at the end of this study.

Highlights on Dinnertime U.S.A.

Eating together is highly valued for cementing family relationships.

Nearly all respondents (95%) think eating together is very/somewhat important. In fact, 93% say at their last dinner together they all ate at the same time. Respondents say the main reasons why eating together is very important are that it:

- promotes togetherness
- offers a time for communication
- is a time to be together
- is the only time they have together.

Dinnertime is a pleasure.

Ninety-nine percent say that dinner was either very or somewhat enjoyable. Seventy-nine percent say that the atmosphere during their last dinner together was calm. Even in homes with children, where the climate could easily get frantic, two-thirds (67%) say the mood was calm.

Dinner together is a regular evening event (amazingly the average is nearly six times a week). Yet, a sizeable percentage want to increase the frequency.

On the average respondents eat together 5.89 times a week. In fact, fifty-six percent eat together everyday. Even so, one quarter (25%) say, if it were possible, they'd choose to eat dinner together even more often. This is especially true in larger households and among those with children. Most (79%) are having dinner as often or more often than two years ago. A high percentage (74%) also plan to have dinner together two years from now.

Dinner at home is the norm and most expect all members to be there.

Ninety-five percent of respondents had their last dinner at home no matter whether the female was working or not.
Interesting too is that 92% of respondents say that nearly all household members were present during dinner the last time respondents had dinner together. Ninety-five percent say all members ate in the same room or location, although nearly half the time someone left the table before the others were done (especially true in households with children). Two of three (66%) respondents expect all their household members to be there for dinner during the week.

Dinner on weekends tends to be more loosely organized; but it's also the time for guests.

Only 54% say that dinner together is a requirement on the weekend. Buffet style is more popular as a serving style on weekends (versus serving on plates or family style during the week). Weekends are the most popular time for dinner guests, with Sunday dinner chosen by the highest percentage.

Family matters are the centerpiece of dinner conversation; TV doesn't dominate over conversation.

Forty-three percent talked about adult activities that day, 27% about the children's activities. Only nine percent discussed national or international news/politics. Half of the respondents (49%), ate their last meal without additional entertainment. Even in households where television was watched during dinner, only one in five (19%), agreed that the TV or VCR dominated over conversation.

Decisions on what to serve are made most often by the female head, but she gets help from other family members.

Eight of 10 (81%) say the female head decided on the menu, while 12% say it was the male head. However, in many households, the female head got help on the decision: one in five (21%) say the male was involved and eight percent agree that children were included. (Children were more likely to help with the decision in homes with working women: 15% of children under 12 and 16% of teens did so in these homes).

While the woman is the primary food preparer, one in seven say that meal is prepared with someone else's help.

Eighty-five percent of respondents agree that it was the female head of household who was the primary person who prepared the last dinner, while only 10% agree it was the male head. However, other household members did help. In households where members helped, fifty-one percent say the male head helped and 28% agree that the children aided the female head. Recipe usage (22%) for this dinner was especially prevalent among suburbanites, those with higher incomes and those in younger to mid-age households. It is true also that the female head is the most likely to complete such tasks as setting the table, clearing after the meal and washing the dishes/loading the dishwasher, but again other household members also help in this chore. Of these tasks, the children are the most likely to have set the table.

Dinnertime averages about a half hour.

The mean time for the last dinner respondents ate was 34.31 minutes. Respondents lingered a bit longer over weekend dinners (36.35 minutes) than over those on the weekday (32.03).

Dinnertime habits are casual.

While dinner seems important to respondents they are obviously trying to streamline it by adopting a casual approach to serving. For example,

- Over half (54%) served the last dinner meal in the kitchen area. The dining room was chosen by 31%.
- The method preferred by the most respondents to serve the last dinner was to have serving dishes at the table (44%). Thirty-three percent served food onto plates in the kitchen, 14% served buffet style and 10% from pots and pans on the table.
- Eighty-five percent used everyday dinnerware.
- Eighty-eight percent used everyday utensils for the meals.
- Eighty-four percent used paper napkins.
- Thirty-nine percent used placemats, 37% no table covering.
- Fifty-six percent used no table decoration.

The menu is a simplified one in respondent households. Here's what was served at the last dinner respondents served at home:

First courses or appetizers are not too popular. Only about one in five (17%) served a first course or appetizers at the last meal. Salads are the preferred first course (35%) followed by soups (19%) and lastly, meat (14%).

Meat is the preferred main course. Meat (served by 44%) was far more popular than poultry (23%) , pasta (10%) and fish/seafood (7%) when the last dinner was served. Meat is somewhat more popular among those 45 and over (50% of those 45-54 served it) than among those younger (42% for the 35-44 year olds). In over nine of 10 respondent households everyone ate the same main dish.

Vegetables and bread products are the preferred side dishes. The majority of households served vegetables (58%) and/or bread or bread products (54%) with the meal. Potatoes and salad were served by 41% and 30% respectively.

The prime beverage is milk. Milk was the most popular beverage (36% consumed) during the meal. It was followed by soda (24%), tea (21%) and tap water (20%). Most (75%) did not serve an after-dinner beverage. However, the most popular after-dinner beverage (served by 17%) was coffee.

About half choose desserts. Forty-seven percent chose dessert, with those older more likely to make the choice for sweets. The most popular dessert was ice cream/frozen dessert.

The dinnertime menu shows that respondents are choosing from a variety of options.

For example,

- About half (51%) of respondents say they used canned products in preparing dinner. (The younger respondents were more prone to use canned products.)
- Frozen packaged foods were used in preparing dinner in about a quarter (27%) of all households. (Those in mid-age households were the most likely to choose frozen packaged foods.)
- When serving a quick dinner, many meal preparers choose to serve hamburgers (20%), pasta (18%) and sandwiches/Sloppy Joes (14%). (Those with children are the most likely to serve hamburgers, pizza and hot dogs.)
- Homemade, frozen and take-out options are used by the highest percentage of respondents for a quick dinner. (Take-out/delivery, whether from a restaurant or a supermarket, is the most popular among the younger age groups).

Attitudes toward dinner and dinnertime habits are affected by demographics. Here are highlights on two demographics of special interest.

***Households with young children.** Those with youngsters 12 and under have a special attachment to the dinner hour, eating together an average of 5.97 times a week compared to the mean of 5.89 for all demographics. A significant percentage (23%) of these families agree that they had dinner together much less frequently two years ago, probably indicating that in some cases young children created a change in lifestyle. Nearly seven of 10 (68%) consider eating together very important, 70% agree that everyone has to be present on weekdays (59% on weekends) and 92% say that everyone was present at the last dinner. This group is among the least likely to have watched the TV/VCR during their last dinner. Needless to say, there are more calm events than dinner with young children, but two-thirds of those with young children and two-thirds of working women with children under 12 ranked the atmosphere as calm. Those with non-teens were more likely than those with teens to say all family members ate in the same room or location. Those with young children are the most apt to serve onto plates served out from the kitchen (37%).

***Households with working women.** One of the interesting points about this study is that working women (especially those with young children) seem very interested in dinner at home despite the obvious time constraints. While it is true that the time working women spent preparing dinner was shorter (e.g., 48.84 minutes for the workers versus 60.26 minutes for non-workers), in large part working women continue to see great value in dinnertime.

- Working women have dinner together with household members frequently. Working women say they eat together an average of 5.64 times a week (5.98 times a week for those with small children) compared to 6.20 times for those non-working women.

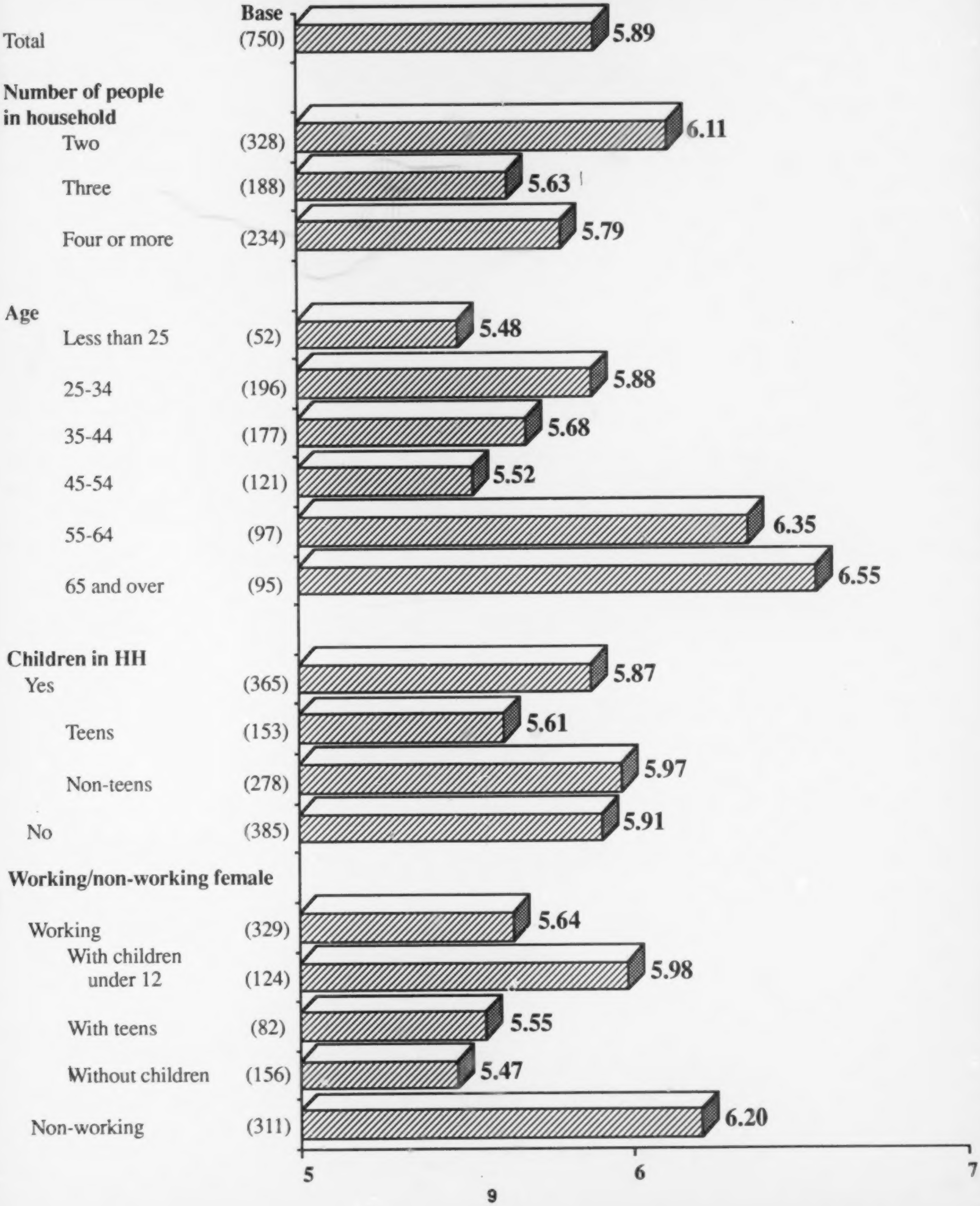
- Working women think dinner is important. Seventy percent of working women with young children agree that eating together is very important. Thirty-one percent of all working females (versus 19% for non-workers) say they would like to eat dinner together more often.

- Nearly all working and non-working women consider dinner very or somewhat enjoyable.

- Working women make dinner a requirement. Those working females who have younger children are as likely to make weekday mealtimes a requirement (70%) as are non-working females.

- Working women want dinner uninterrupted. Working females with children under 12 are less likely to say they had the TV/VCR on while they ate than non-working females.

CHART 1



Frequency of Dinner Together (Days)

CHART 2

Importance of Eating Dinner Together
—Very Important—

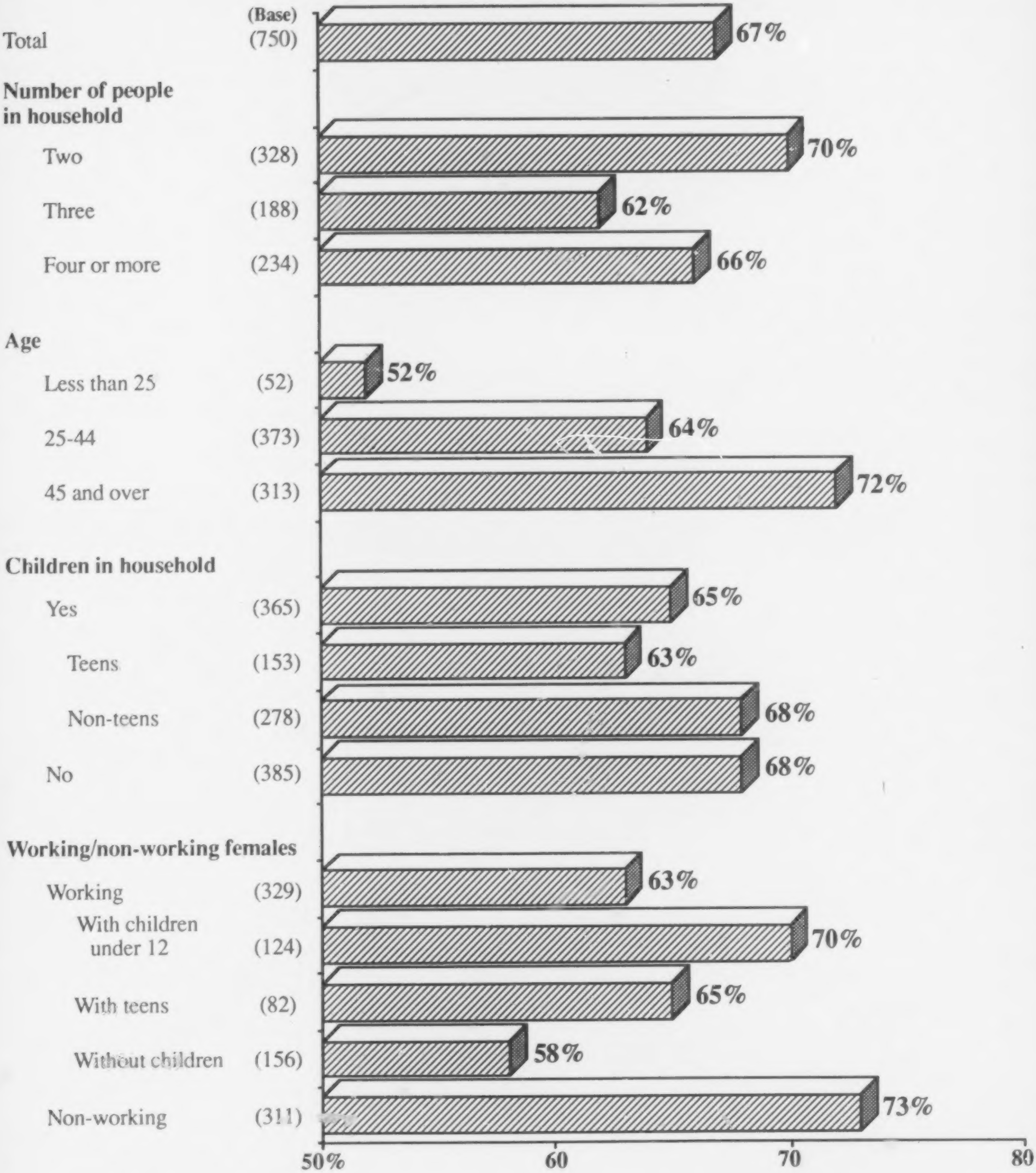


CHART 3

Respondents Who Would Like to Eat Dinner More Often

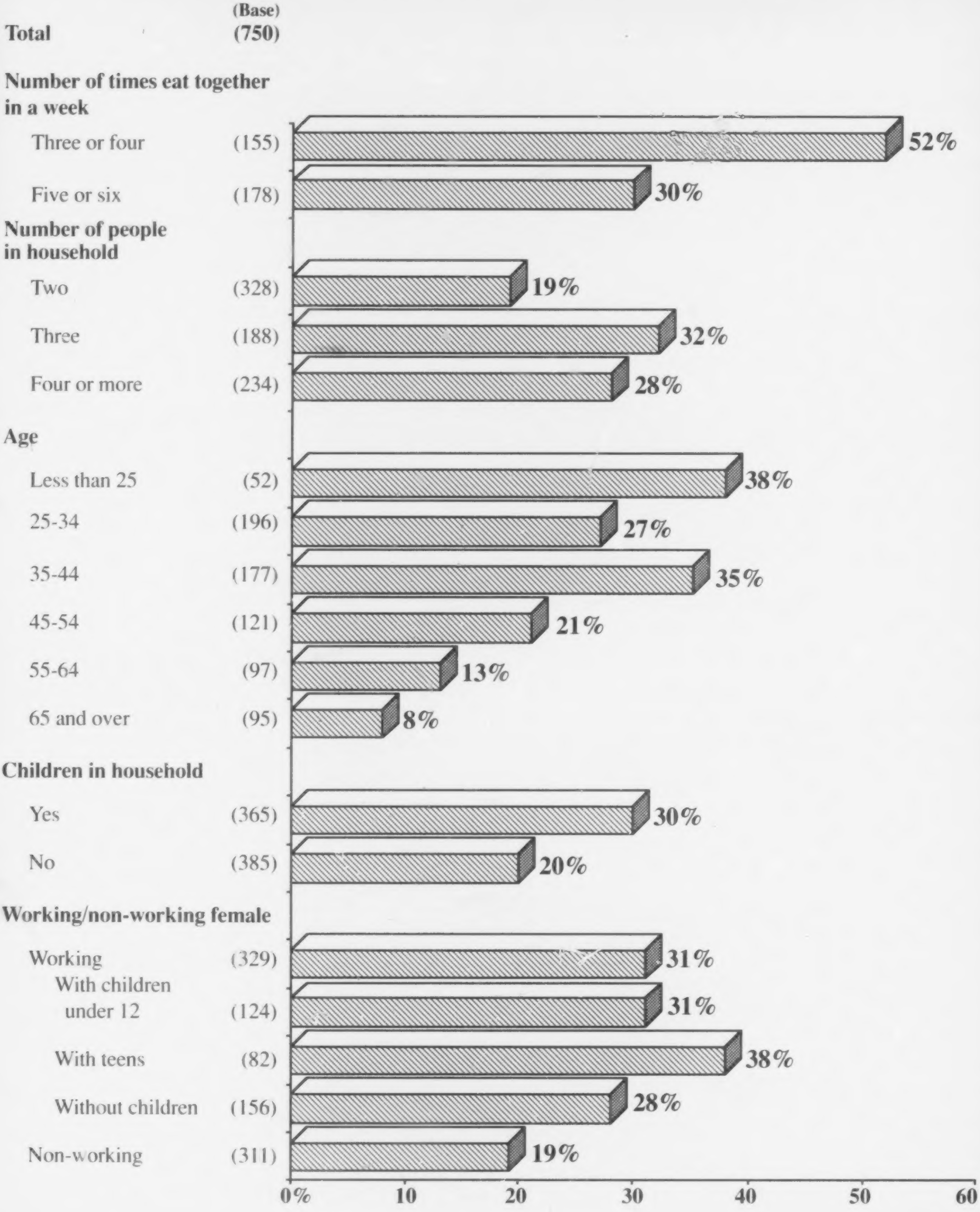


CHART 4

Requirement Concerning Presence of Household Members During the Week —Everyone Has to Be There—

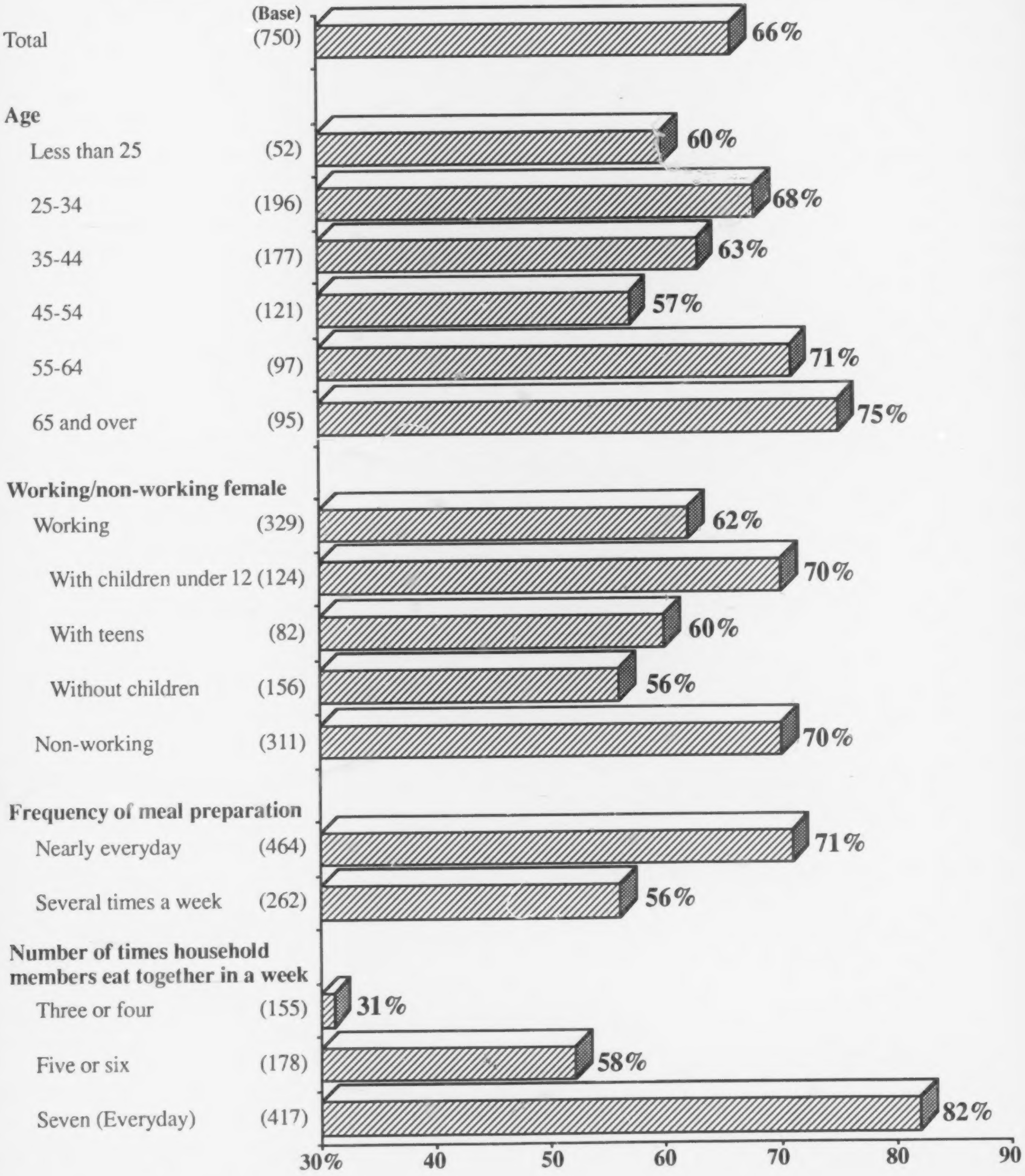
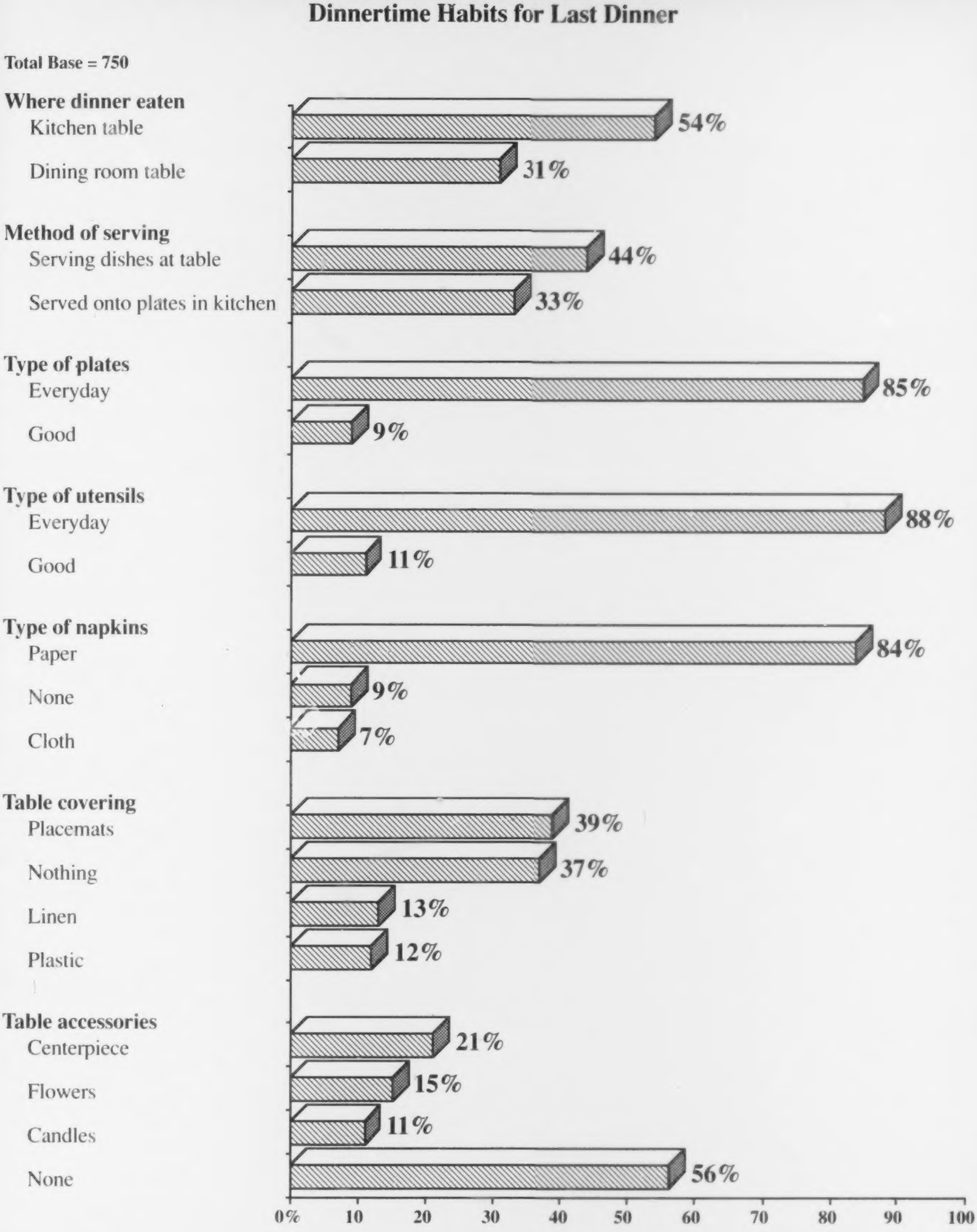


CHART 5



Dinnertime Habits for Last Dinner
Total Base = 750
Where dinner eaten
Kitchen table
54%
Dining room table
31%
Method of serving
Serving dishes at table
44%
Served onto plates in kitchen
33%
Type of plates
Everyday
85%
Good
9%
Type of utensils
Everyday
88%
Good
11%
Type of napkins
Paper
84%
None
9%
Cloth
7%
Table covering
Placemats
39%
Nothing
37%
Linen
13%
Plastic
12%
Table accessories
Centerpiece
21%
Flowers
15%
Candles
11%
None
56%
0%
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100

CHART 6

Habits of Households With/Without Children

Total	(750)
Have children	(365)
Teens	(153)
Non-teens	(278)
No children	(385)

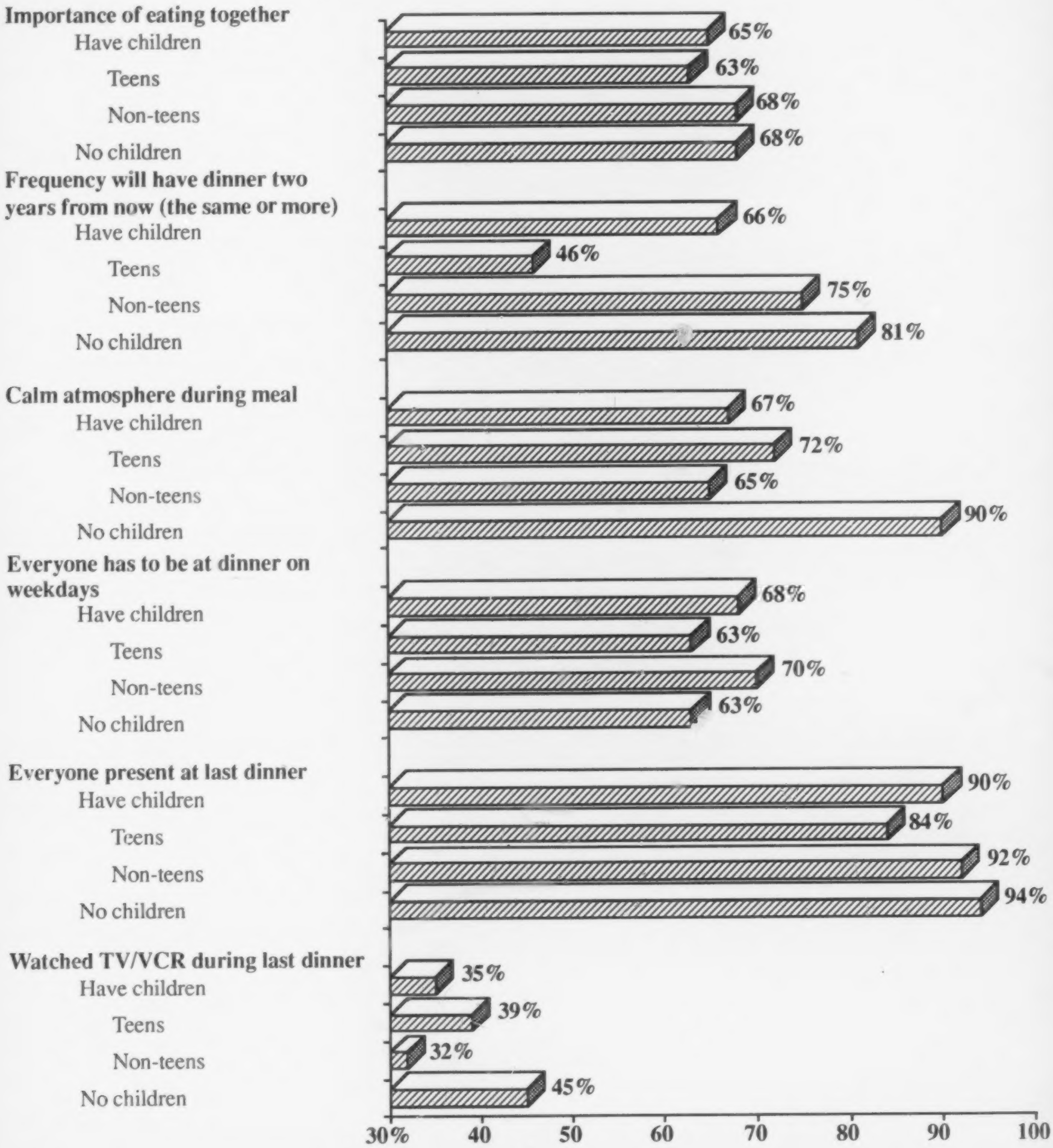


CHART 7

Habits of Households With/Without Working Females

Total	**(750)**
Working females	(329)
Working females with children under 12	(124)
Working females with teens	(82)
Working females with no children	(156)
Non-working females	(311)

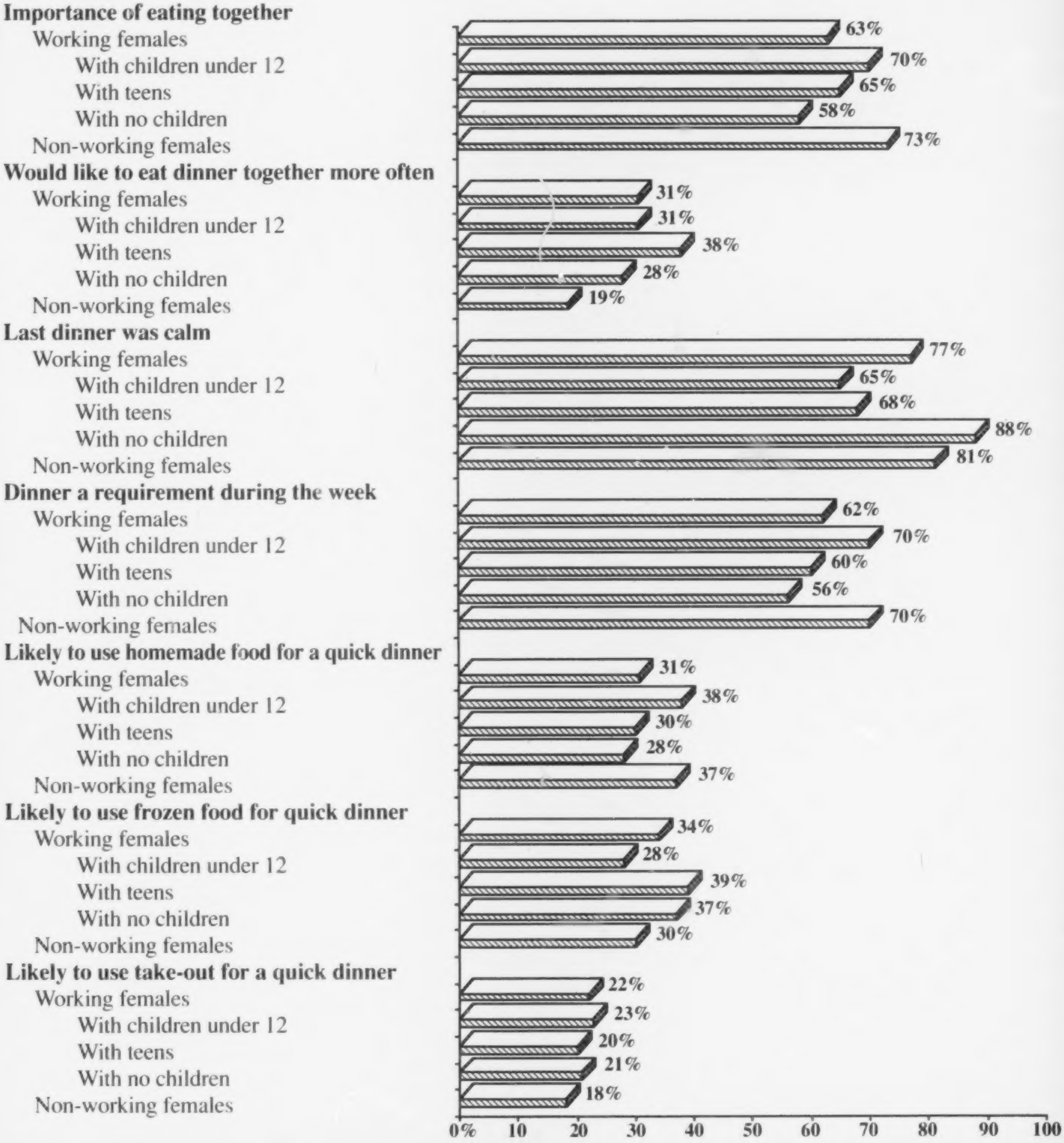
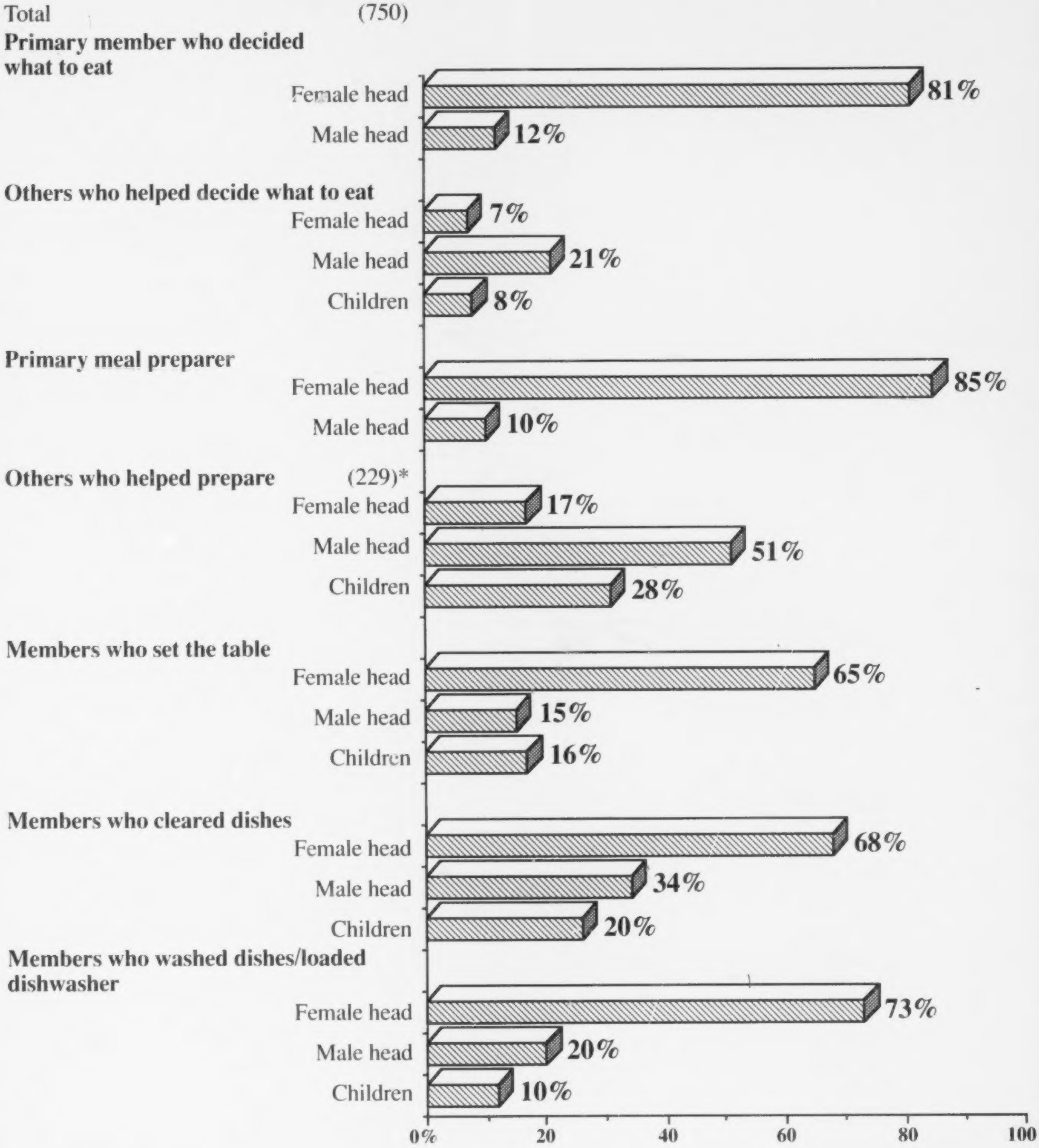


CHART 8

Household Involvement in Last Dinner



*Those households where other members helped prepare dinner.

ATTITUDES TOWARD DINNER TOGETHER

On average, respondents with two or more in the household eat together nearly six times a week.

Survey participants say household members eat together on average 5.89 times per week. That is, logically, somewhat truer in two-person households (6.11 times) than in larger housholds (e.g., 5.79 days for four or more members), because it's likely harder to coordinate schedules among more people.

Looking at the age groups, those 55 and over are the most likely to eat together (6.35 times for 55-64 and 6.55 times for 65 and over), though the 25-34 year olds rank next highest (5.88 days), possibly due to young children in the family. In fact, households with non-teens (5.97 times) rank slightly higher in frequency of eating together than those without children (5.91 times) or those with teens (5.61 times).

Non-working females say their household members gather for dinner most often (6.20 times); working females with children under 12 show the second highest frequency (5.98 times).

Frequency of dinner together declines as income rises (those making less than $20,000 eat together on 6.12 days while that's true of 5.50 days for those in the $50,000 or more category).

TABLE A

FREQUENCY OF DINNER TOGETHER

Q. S2: On the average, how many times per week would you say these people eat dinner together?

		Times Per Week Ate Dinner					
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Mean Number of Times
Total	(750)	10%	11	15	9	56	5.89
Number of people in household							
Two	(328)	8%	10	11	6	65	6.11
Three	(188)	14%	13	16	9	48	5.63
Four or more	(234)	9%	11	20	12	49	5.79
Metro/non-metro							
City	(272)	9%	13	15	8	55	5.88
Suburb	(267)	11%	10	16	10	53	5.84
Rural	(202)	9%	10	14	7	60	6.00
Age							
Less than 25	(52)	12%	17	23	8	40	5.48
25-34	(196)	10%	11	16	8	56	5.88
35-44	(177)	11%	13	20	11	46	5.68
45-54	(121)	15%	14	20	7	45	5.52
55-64	(97)	7%	4	5	13	70	6.35
65 and over	(95)	2	6	6	5	80	6.55
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	8%	11	18	11	52	5.87
Teens	(153)	10%	13	24	10	42	5.61
Non-teens	(278)	7%	10	18	10	55	5.97
No	(385)	11%	11	12	6	59	5.91
Working/non-working females							
Working females	(329)	14%	12	18	10	47	5.64
Working females with children under 12	(124)	7%	6	23	11	53	5.98
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	11%	12	27	11	39	5.55
Working females with no children	(156)	19%	15	13	8	46	5.47
Non-working females	(311)	6%	9	11	7	67	6.20
Income							
Less than $20,000	(118)	8%	8	14	3	66	6.12
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	12%	11	13	9	56	5.86
$50,000 or more	(126)	11%	15	23	14	37	5.50
Importance of eating together							
Very important	(499)	7%	7	13	8	65	6.16
Somewhat important	(208)	15%	17	20	11	37	5.37

NOTE: This screening question is based on respondents with two or more in the household. On this and future charts the age category contains 12 "No Answers."

The female head is generally the main person who prepares dinner; nearly one in seven prepare this meal equally with someone else.

Eighty-six percent of female heads agree they're the main food preparer. Fourteen percent say they share the task equally with someone else.

TABLE B

WHO PREPARES THE MEALS

Q. S4: Are you the main person who prepares meals in your house or is it someone else?

		Identification of Meal Preparer	
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Female Head	Male Head
Total	(750)	(641)	(75)
Respondent prepares most of meals		86%	61%
Respondent and others share preparation equally		14	39

NOTE: This screening questionnaire is based on respondents with two or more in the household.

Nearly all prepare dinner everyday or several times a week.

Ninety-seven percent of survey participants say they prepare dinner nearly everyday or several times a week (62% everyday; 35% several times a week).

Dinner preparation activity is affected by age, rising to a high in the 45+ age ranges (e.g., 69% of the 45-54 year olds say nearly everyday). Those less than 25 are the least likely to prepare meals nearly everyday (44%), probably because their lives are the least settled. Interestingly, of those in the baby boom years, it's the older segment—those more prone to have older children—that is most likely to prepare these meals (63% of the 35-44 group, versus 56% of the 25-34 group).

This same pattern is played out when looking specifically at households with older children. For example, dinner preparation ranks highest among those with teenage children. (Seventy-one percent cook nearly everyday compared with 64% of those with non-teens.) The lowest cooking activity is among those without any children. (Fifty-nine percent of this group cooks dinner nearly everyday.)

While non-working females (77%) say they're more prone to fix dinner everyday than working females (60%), those working females with teenagers place a close second (74%).

As income rises, everyday cooking activity declines, but conversely, as household size increases so does dinnertime cooking. While 68% of those making less than $20,000 cook dinner at home nearly everyday, that's true of just over half (54%) of those with incomes of $50,000 or more. Conversely, 59% of two-person households cook nearly everyday but 66% of households with four or more members do so.

Those in the South (66%) and the North Central (63%) are the most prone to cook dinner everyday.

TABLE C

HOW OFTEN DINNER IS PREPARED

Q. S5:How often would you say, you, yourself, prepare dinner for your household?

		Frequency of Preparation			
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Nearly Everyday**	**Several Times a Week**	**Once a Week**	**Once or Twice a Month**
Total	(750)	62%	35	3	*
Age					
Less than 25	(52)	44%	50	6	—
25-34	(196)	56%	40	4	1
35-44	(177)	63%	34	3	—
45-54	(121)	69%	28	2	1
55-64	(97)	68%	29	2	1
65 and over	(95)	65%	33	2	—
Children in household					
Yes	(365)	65%	31	4	1
Teens	(153)	71%	24	5	1
Non-teens	(278)	64%	33	3	*
No	(385)	59%	39	2	*
Working/non-working females					
Working females	(329)	60%	38	2	—
Working females with children under 12	(124)	63%	35	2	—
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	74%	22	4	—
Working females with no children	(156)	53%	46	1	—
Non-working females	(311)	77%	22	*	*
Income					
Less than $20,000	(118)	68%	30	3	—
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	61%	35	3	1
$50,000 or more	(126)	54%	41	5	—
Number in household					
Two	(328)	59%	38	3	*
Three	(188)	62%	35	2	1
Four or more	(234)	66%	30	3	—
Region					
Northeast	(118)	58%	41	1	1
North Central	(254)	63%	35	2	—
South	(230)	66%	30	4	*
West	(144)	59%	37	3	1

NOTE: Based on those preparing dinner once a month or more.
* = Less than .5%

The vast majority of respondents (95%) say that eating together is very/somewhat important.

Sixty-seven percent of survey participants agree that eating together is very important, and 28% more say it is somewhat important. This attitude is reflected in the various demographic groups, but as might be expected, there are differences by lifestage.

It's no surprise that among those less than 25 (whose adult lifestyles are less likely to be molded into a pattern), only 52% think dinner together is very important. That jumps to 64% for the 25-44 age group (those most likely to have young families) and bumps up to 72% among those 45 and over.

The presence of children also affects attitudes about eating together. While there's a 10% spread between non-working and working women who say eating together is very important, that virtually disappears when comparing non-working women (73%) and working women with children under 12 (70%).

Those who place a high value on eating dinner together are more likely to eat together. Dinner is very important to 77% of those eating seven times a week, but it's very important to only 46% of those eating three or four times a week.

TABLE 1

IMPORTANCE OF EATING TOGETHER

Q. 45: How important is eating together to you and your family?

		Importance		
(Table Reads Across)	Base	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant /Somewhat Unimportant /Very Unimportant
Total	(750)	67%	28	6
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	70%	25	6
Three	(188)	62%	34	5
Four or more	(234)	66%	27	7
Number of times eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	46%	43	11
Five or six	(178)	58%	37	5
Seven (Everyday)	(417)	77%	18	4
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	52%	38	10
25-44	(373)	64%	31	5
45 and over	(313)	72%	22	5
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	65%	29	5
Teens in household	(153)	63%	30	7
Non-teens in household	(278)	68%	28	4
No	(385)	68%	26	6
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	63%	34	3
Working females with children under 12	(124)	70%	28	2
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	65%	30	5
Working females with no children	(156)	58%	38	3
Non-working females	(311)	73%	21	5

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

The top reasons why eating together is very important are it 1) promotes togetherness and 2) is a time for communication.

The biggest reasons why respondents say eating together is very important are that

- **it promotes family cohesiveness/stability/togetherness (25%),**
- **it's a time to communicate with each other (23%),**
- **it's a time to be together (21%),**
- **it's the only time they have together (21%).**

The mention that eating together promotes family togetherness is highest in homes with children (32%) and working females with teens (38%).

Respondents who say it is the only time they have together are most likely to be in larger households (27% with three or more in household) and when children are present (28% with children).

TABLE 2

WHY EATING TOGETHER IS IMPORTANT
- VERY IMPORTANT MENTIONS ONLY -

Q. 46: Why do you say that?

	Total	Children in Household	Female Working with Teenagers	Number of People in Household	
				Two	Three or More
	Very	Very	Very	Very	Very
Reasons Given					
	(499)	(239)	(53)	(228)	(271)
Promotes family atmosphere/stability/togetherness	25%	32%	38%	17%	31%
Time to communicate/talk together	23%	21	26	25	22
Time to be together	21%	20	19	21	20
Only time we're together	21%	28	28	12	28
Time to discuss day's events/activities	19%	23	25	16	22
Like being together/enjoy each other	13%	8	11	20	8
Habit/just our style	13%	8	9	17	10
Easier/more convenient/don't have to fix multiple meals	5%	4	—	6	4
Schedules won't permit/not always possible	*	—	—	*	—

NOTE: "Other" and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions
* = less than 0.5%

One quarter of respondents say, if it were possible, they'd choose to eat dinner together more often.

One-fourth (25%) of survey participants would like to eat dinner together more often if it were possible.

The need to eat dinner together more frequently is greater in larger households (32% agree in three-person homes compared to 19% in two-person homes) and when children are present (30% in homes with children compared to 20% in childless homes).

In homes where the female is working, the desire to eat together more often is also greater than when she is not working (31% when the female is working compared to 19% when she is not). In homes where the female is working and teenagers are present, the desire to eat together more often is even more pronounced (38%).

While those in older households have been shown previously to be eating dinner together more frequently than younger respondents, the growth in dinner together is likely to come from these younger households.

A higher percentage of respondents under 45 have a greater desire to eat together (e.g., 35% agree among those 35-44) than do those over 45 (e.g., 13% agree among respondents 55-64).

Overall, these differences suggest that groups who currently eat dinner together less frequently would like to do so more often.

TABLE 3

HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU LIKE TO EAT DINNER TOGETHER

Q. 44: If it were possible, would you like to eat dinner all together more often, the same amount, or less often than you do now?

		Frequency		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**More**	**Same**	**Less**
Total	(750)	25%	72	3
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	19%	79	2
Three	(188)	32%	65	3
Four or more	(234)	28%	69	3
Number of times eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	52%	46	2
Five or six	(178)	30%	68	2
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	38%	60	2
25-34	(196)	27%	71	3
35-44	(177)	35%	62	3
45-54	(121)	21%	77	2
55-64	(97)	13%	84	3
65 and over	(95)	8%	87	4
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	30%	67	3
No	(385)	20%	78	3
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	31%	68	1
Working females with children under 12	(124)	31%	69	1
Working females with teens	(82)	38%	60	2
Working females with no children	(156)	28%	71	1
Non-working females	(311)	19%	77	4

Change in adult schedules and decreased demands from other household members' jobs are the main reasons given that would allow an increase in the likelihood of eating dinner together more often.

Among those who say they want to eat together more often, a change in adult schedules would allow the highest percentage (31%) of these respondents to do so. This is even more true among those eating dinner together three or four times week, where 41% agree. Also for working females, a change in adult schedules would lead to greater time spent eating together at home (32% among working females compared to 22% among non-working females). Those who consider dinner together somewhat important suggest that it is primarily the adults' busy schedules (40%) that inhibit eating together.

Other reasons that would increase the time spent eating together at home are decreased demands from the jobs of other household members (25%), lesser demands from the job for the respondent (24%) and changes in the children's schedules (17%).

TABLE 4

EVENTS THAT WOULD INCREASE LIKELIHOOD OF EATING DINNER TOGETHER MORE OFTEN

Q 44a: What, if anything, would cause your household to eat dinner together more often?

		Event			
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Change in Adult Schedule	Decreased Demands of Other Household Member's Job	Decreased Demands of Respondent's Job	Change in Teens' or Childrens' Schedule
Those who would like to eat dinner together more often	(186)	31%	25	24	17
Number of times eat together in a week					
Three or four	(80)	41%	23	21	20
Five or six	(53)	30%	28	28	23
Importance of eating together					
Very important	(113)	27%	27	24	16
Somewhat important	(63)	40%	22	25	17
Working/non-working females					
Working females	(102)	32%	19	33	23
Non-working females	(58)	22%	38	10	9

NOTE: "Other" and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions

The majority of respondents say that two years ago they had dinner together as often as they do now.

Most people say their dinner habits over the last two years have not changed (63%). Some say they ate together less often two years ago (19%) and about the same amount say they ate together more often (16%).

However, once again children impact the results. Those in households with non-teen children had dinner together far less frequently two years ago than those in teen households where the story is just about reversed. To underscore the point, note too that those 25-34 (and those probably with small children) are far more likely to agree to having dinner together less frequently two years ago (when they likely had no children) than older age groups. Among the very young (less than 25) there is evidence that they're still settling into a dinnertime pattern: 46% say they had dinner together less frequently two years ago and 23% agree they ate together more.

The incidence of those saying they ate together more often two years ago is much greater than those who currently eat together less frequently (35% for those who eat together only three or four times a week compared to 21% for those who eat together five or six times a week.)

Growth in eating together is among those who currently eat together three or four times a week. (Thirty-five percent of those who eat together three or four times a week say there is an increase in dinner frequency compared to two years ago versus 21% for those eating together five or six times a week.)

TABLE 5

HOW FREQUENTLY HAD DINNER TOGETHER TWO YEARS AGO

Q.47: Please think back to about two years ago. Did your household eat dinner all together more often, the same amount, or less often than you do now?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Frequency		
		More	Same	Less
Total	(750)	16%	63	19
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	10%	67	20
Three	(188)	18%	60	21
Four or more	(234)	23%	61	16
Number of times eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	35%	48	15
Five or six	(178)	21%	55	22
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	23%	31	46
25-34	(196)	15%	54	29
35-44	(177)	24%	63	12
45-54	(121)	16%	69	14
55-64	(97)	7%	80	12
65 and over	(95)	7%	80	11
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	21%	59	19
Teens in household	(153)	31%	59	9
Non-teens in household	(278)	17%	60	23
No	(385)	12%	68	19
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	21%	58	19
Non-working females	(311)	11%	70	18

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

Children's issues again dominate when respondents eating dinner less frequently than two years ago explain their reasons.

While the top single response of survey participants as to why they had dinner together more often two years ago is "increased demands of job," the next three highest responses (and a fourth further down the list) refer to the effect of children's lifestages on dinnertime:

Children left home	17%
Children now in school	11%
Children older/at home less/ away more	10%
New children in family	5%

TABLE 6

WHY HAD DINNER TOGETHER MORE OFTEN TWO YEARS AGO

Q. 47a: What are the main reasons for this change?

(Table Reads Down)		Total
(Those who ate together more often two years ago)	(Base)	(121)
Reasons Given		
Increased demands of job		20%
Children left home		17
Children now in school		11
Children older/at home less/away more		10
Respondent went to work		8
Divorced/separated		6
New children in family		5
Spouse/partner went to work		5

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

Most respondents say they are likely to eat together as frequently or more frequently in the future, but the ages of children affect this matter to a great degree.

Two thirds (66%) of respondents say they will eat together as frequently and 8% anticipate eating together more frequently two years from now. Only about one-quarter (23%) indicate that they are likely to eat together less often.

As might be anticipated, those households with teenagers are expecting to have dinner together less often in the next two years (52%) than are those with non-teens (24%). Probably the children's activity/work schedules and/or the advent of teens leaving home for college/marriage, etc. logically means fewer dinners together for these families. This may also account for differences in age groups. Note that the 25-34 year olds (those likely to have small children) show a more stable projection of dinner together in future than those in the 35-44 and 45-54 group (those likely to have teenagers).

Respondents in two-person households (76%) show a higher incidence of expecting to eat together with the same frequency as they do now than do those in three-person homes (62%) and in four-or-more-person homes (56%) where again children are likely to be growing up and leaving home.

TABLE 7

HOW FREQUENTLY WILL HAVE DINNER TOGETHER TWO YEARS FROM NOW

Q. 48: Now, please think ahead to two years from now. Will the people in your home eat dinner together more often, the same amount or less often than you do now?

		Frequency		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	More	Same	Less
Total	(750)	8%	66	23
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	10%	76	11
Three	(188)	7%	62	29
Four or more	(234)	6%	56	35
Number of times eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	22%	41	34
Five or six	(178)	6%	60	33
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	19%	46	35
25-34	(196)	11%	70	18
35-44	(177)	6%	59	34
45-54	(121)	6%	59	31
55-64	(97)	5%	76	12
65 and over	(95)	4%	83	7
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	7%	59	31
Teens in household	(153)	5%	41	52
Non-teens in households	(278)	8%	67	24
No	(385)	9%	72	15

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

DINNER ENVIRONMENT AND DYNAMICS

In the vast majority of households, dinner "together" means that everyone eats at the same time.

Nearly all respondents (93%) say that during the last meal shared together, everyone ate at the same time. However, the incidence drops somewhat as the number of people in the house increases (96% for two members; 89% for four or more).

On the weekend, particularly on Sunday, survey participants are slightly more prone to eat together at the same time (there is a four percentage point difference between weekday and Sunday).

The importance attached to eating together is strongly correlated to the likelihood of eating together at the same time. Those who attach great importance to eating together are more likely to have had dinner together at the same time (95% among those who say eating together is very important as opposed to 90% for those who say it is somewhat important).

TABLE 8

EATING TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME

Q. 5: When you last had dinner together, did all of you eat at the same time?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Ate Last Dinner Together at the SameTime Yes	No
Total	(750)	93%	7
Number of people in household			
Two	(328)	96%	4
Three	(188)	93%	7
Four or more	(234)	89%	11
Past meal eaten together			
Weekday	(383)	92%	8
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	95%	5
Sunday	(78)	96%	4
Importance of eating together			
Very important	(499)	95%	5
Somewhat important	(208)	90%	10

While nearly all household members were present during dinner (92%) the last time respondents ate together, this logically erodes a bit in larger households and where teens are present.

Not surprisingly, the larger the household, the more difficult it is to gather everyone around the table. For example, while 95% of households with two members say everyone was present, that's true of 86% of households with four or more members, still a substantial percentage.

As has been found to be the case previously, younger boomer households were more likely to say all household members were present (e.g., 97% for those 25-34) than older boomer households (e.g., 85% for those 35-44) and those with teens (84%).

TABLE 9

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS PRESENT DURING DINNER

Q. 2: Were there any household members who were not present?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Everyone Present	Everyone Not Present
Total	(750)	92%	8
Number of people in household			
Two	(328)	95%	5
Three	(188)	93%	7
Four or more	(234)	86%	14
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	92%	8
25-34	(196)	97%	3
35-44	(177)	85%	15
45-54	(121)	88%	12
55-64	(97)	94%	6
65 and over	(95)	96%	4
Children in household			
Yes	(365)	90%	10
Teens in household	(153)	84%	16
Non-teens in household	(278)	92%	8
No	(385)	94%	6

Note: Multiple mentions

Weekends are the most popular time for dinner guests (one in five who had their last dinner on a weekend hosted dinners then), with Sunday dinner being chosen by the highest percentage.

While one in ten (10%) of those respondents whose last dinner was on a weekday say they had guests, that is true of one in five (20%) of those whose last dinner was on a weekend and 28% of those eating dinner on Sunday.

Nearly half of dinner guests were adult relatives (45%), 35% were adult friends and one-quarter were children/teens.

TABLE 10

GUESTS PRESENT AT THE LAST EVENING MEAL

Q. 3: Were any guests present?

Q. 3a: If so, who were the guests?

		Last Meal Eaten Together at Home			**Children in Household**		**Number of People in Household**		
(Table Reads Down)	**Total**	**Weekday**	**Fri./Sat./Sun.**	**Sun.**	**Yes**	**No**	**Two**	**Three**	**Four or More**
Total	(750)	(383)	(364)	(78)	(365)	(385)	(328)	(188)	(234)
No guests	85%	90%	79%	72%	84%	85%	84%	85%	85%
Guests present	15	10	20	28	16	14	16	15	15
Type of guests present									
(Those who had guests)	(114)								
Adult relatives	45%								
Adult friends/ neighbors	35								
Children/teens	25								
Business associates	1								
Other	3								

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions

Almost all respondents ate their last dinner at home whether the female is working or not.

Ninety-five percent of all respondents ate their last dinner together at home compared to only 5% who ate away from home. Surprisingly, there are no appreciable differences in eating out incidence for working versus non-working females. Larger households are somewhat more likely than smaller ones to have had dinner together at home; those with children are more likely than those without to do likewise.

Three percent say the last evening meal was a special occasion.

TABLE 11

EATING AT HOME VS. OUT AND SPECIAL OCCASION/CELEBRATION

Q. 5c: Was the meal eaten at home or eaten out?

Q. 4: Was the dinner a special occasion of any kind?

(Tables Read Across)	(Base)	Eaten at Home	Eaten Out		(Base)	Last Evening Meal Special Occasion	
						Yes	No
Total	(750)	95%	5	Total	(750)	3	97%
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	97%	3				
No	(385)	93%	7				
Number of people in household							
Two	(328)	92%	8				
Three	(188)	97%	3				
Four or more	(234)	97%	3				
Working/non-working females							
Working females	(329)	95%	5				
Full-time working females	(241)	95%	5				
Part-time working females	(88)	98%	2				
Working females with children	(173)	97%	3				
Working females without children	(156)	94%	6				
Non-working females	(311)	95%	5				

The last dinner together was a time for discussion of the day's activities. Conversation mainly centered on the members of the household but varied somewhat by lifestage.

Forty-three percent of respondents say that they talked about the adults' daily activities; 27% discussed the children's activities.

Of course, age is a factor as it relates to lifestage. Those likely to have small children (those aged 25-34) logically still favor adult matters for discussion. (Fifty-five percent in this group discussed adult activities versus 36% who talked about children's activities.) A higher percentage of those likely to have older children (those aged 35-44) indicate that a discussion of children's daily activities actually may take precedence. Forty-three percent of this group discussed adult activities; 50% talked about children's matters. The same pattern is true in larger households where again the probability of children is greater.

When first looking at the figures for working/non-working women it's easy to generalize that those with households with working women are far more likely to discuss adult activities than are those with non-working women. But consider the difference when the presence of children under 12 is factored into the equation. These women with young children are more likely than non-working women to have discussed adult activities (44% versus 34% respectively), but they're also more apt to talk about the children's day too (50% of workers with young children discussed the children's activities versus 26% of the non-workers).

TABLE 12

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION AT DINNER TIME

Q. 9: During the meal, what did you talk about?

		Age						Number of People in Household			Working/Non-working		
(Table Reads Down)	Total	Less Than 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and Over	Two	Three	Four or More	Working Female	Working Female Children Under 12	Non-working Female
Base	(750)	(52)	(196)	(177)	(121)	(97)	(95)	(328)	(188)	(234)	(329)	(124)	(311)
Day's activities of adults	43%	38%	55%	43%	44%	37%	26%	41%	46%	42%	50%	44%	34%
Day's activities of children	27	13	36	50	17	11	3	6	32	52	30	50	26
Friends, neighbors, relatives/gossip	10	12	8	8	10	12	12	10	10	9	9	9	11
National or international news/politics	9	8	7	5	12	15	13	10	10	8	8	7	11
Plans for evening, weekend, leisure time	8	4	7	10	8	8	7	6	9	10	11	12	4
Local or neighborhood news or events	7	2	5	7	7	8	17	9	7	5	6	9	9
Nothing in particular	6	13	3	6	3	6	14	8	5	4	4	3	9

NOTE: Major mentions
Multiple mentions

Respondents generally perceive dinner together as a calm point in the day; even two-thirds of those with children and two-thirds of working women with children under 12 rank the atmosphere as calm.

For most survey participants (79%), the atmosphere during the meal was calm. Even in homes with children, where the climate could easily get frenetic, two-thirds (67%) say the mood was calm, 29% say in-between and only 4% describe the scene as hectic. As might be expected, those in households with small children are somewhat less likely to say the scene was calm than are those with teens.

Whether the female works or not has only a small impact on the mood. Seventy-seven percent of working women versus 81% of non-working females say the atmosphere was calm. Again, about two-thirds (65%) of working females with children under 12 agree.

Age and household size, which again reflect the presence of children in many cases, show similar patterns. Larger homes are less calm (63% say dinner was calm in households of four or more) than small households (90% say the evening meal was serene). Those under 25 and those 45+ generally have calmer mealtimes than those in the more active child-bearing middle segments (25-34 and 35-44).

TABLE 13

ATMOSPHERE DURING THE MEAL

Q. 7: During that meal at home, was the atmosphere ...?

		Atmosphere		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Calm	Hectic	Something In-Between
Total	(750)	79%	3	18
Any children in household				
Yes	(365)	67%	4	29
Teens in household	(153)	72%	3	25
Non-teens in household	(278)	65%	5	30
No	(385)	90%	2	8
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	90%	2	9
Three	(188)	79%	2	19
Four or more	(234)	63%	5	32
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	77%	—	23
25-34	(196)	71%	5	23
35-44	(177)	73%	5	23
45-54	(121)	83%	1	16
55-64	(97)	90%	1	9
65 and over	(95)	91%	—	9
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	77%	3	20
Working females with children under 12	(124)	65%	5	30
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	68%	4	28
Working females with no children	(156)	88%	3	9
Non-working females	(311)	81%	3	16

Dinner together is acknowledged as an enjoyable occasion in virtually all households.

Nearly everyone (99%) says they enjoyed/somewhat enjoyed the last meal they shared together at home. In fact, the majority (59%) say they enjoyed it very much.

While some demographic factors such as the presence of children affect the degree of enjoyment, nearly all respondents in all demographic categories found the dinner very or somewhat enjoyable.

TABLE 14

ENJOYMENT OF DINNER

Q. 8: And, would you say, it was ...?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Very Enjoyable	Somewhat Enjoyable	Somewhat/ Very Unenjoyable
Total	(750)	59%	40	1
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	52%	46	1
Teens in household	(153)	57%	42	1
Non-teens in household	(278)	50%	48	2
No	(385)	65%	34	1
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	65%	33	1
Three	(188)	59%	40	1
Four or more	(234)	50%	50	1
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	56%	44	—
Non-working females	(311)	62%	36	2
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	52%	48	—
25-34	(196)	48%	51	1
35-44	(177)	56%	42	2
45-54	(121)	64%	34	1
55-64	(97)	73%	25	—
65 and over	(95)	65%	34	1

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

Dinner "together" usually means that everyone is together in the same room, but this arrangement is somewhat more likely to be relaxed in larger households and in households with teens.

Nearly everyone who shared their last meal at home with other people in the house say they ate in the same room (95% overall).

In homes without children, respondents ate their meal in the same room more often than when children were present (97% in homes without children as opposed to 93% in homes with children). The presence of teenagers more than small children further lowers this frequency (94% in homes with small children and 90% where teenagers are present).

TABLE 15

EATING DINNER TOGETHER IN THE SAME ROOM

Q. 5B: Did those eating at the same time eat in the same room or location?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Ate the Last Meal Together in the Same Room Yes	No
(Those who eat at the same time)	(745)	95%	4
Number of people in household			
Two	(325)	98%	2
Three	(186)	97%	3
Four or more	(234)	90%	9
Children in household			
Yes	(363)	93%	6
Teens in household	(151)	90%	9
Non-teens in household	(278)	94%	5
No	(382)	97%	3

Note: "Don't Know" not included

Two of three respondents expect all their household members to be there for dinner during the week. Respondents who prepare meals and eat together everyday expect everyone to be present more than those who eat and prepare meals less often.

Two-thirds (66%) of all households expect every member to be present for dinner during the week. Respondents in households where meals are prepared nearly everyday (71%) expect household members to be there for dinner more than households where meals are prepared several times a week (56%). As the frequency of times household members eat together in a week increases, the percentage of respondents that expect everyone to be there for dinner also increases dramatically (31% of those who eat three or four times a week compared to 82% of those who eat together everyday). Seventy-four percent of the household members who consider eating together very important expect everyone in the house to be there for dinner compared to 51% of those who consider it somewhat important.

Age, the work status of females and the presence and age of children influence whether all members gather around the dinner table.

- **Age/Children.** Those likely to have younger children and those likely to be "empty nesters" are the most apt to eat together. For example, 68% of those 25-34, 70% with non-teens (and a working female) in the household and 71% of those 55-64 say dinner together is a requirement. That's true of only 60% of those under 25, 60% of those working females with teens and 56% of those with no children.

- **Work Status/Children.** Those working females who have younger children are as likely to make weekday mealtimes a requirement (70%) as are those who are non-working females (70%), but the percentage drops to 60% among working women with teens.

Interesting, too, is that there is some difference by region. Those in the North Central (69%) and South (67%) are somewhat more likely to require everyone at the table, possibly because of longer commutes in Northeast and Western metropolitan areas or because these consumers live more traditional lifestyles.

TABLE 16

REQUIREMENT CONCERNING PRESENCE OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS DURING THE WEEK

Q. 40: During the week, in your house, do you expect everyone to be there for dinner or is it more an option to be present?

		Requirement During the Week		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Everyone Has to be There	Optional	Neither
Total	(750)	66%	29	5
Frequency of meal preparation				
Nearly everyday	(464)	71%	25	5
Several times a week	(262)	56%	35	7
Number of times household members eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	31%	57	11
Five or six	(178)	58%	35	6
Seven (everyday)	(417)	82%	15	3
Importance of eating together				
Very important	(499)	74%	20	5
Somewhat important	(208)	51%	42	7
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	60%	35	4
25-34	(196)	68%	30	2
35-44	(177)	63%	32	4
45-54	(121)	57%	33	10
55-64	(97)	71%	21	7
65 and over	(95)	75%	18	7
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	62%	32	6
Working females with children under 12	(124)	70%	27	3
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	60%	34	6
Working females with no children	(156)	56%	36	7
Non-working females	(311)	70%	24	6
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	68%	27	5
Teens	(153)	63%	32	5
Non-teens	(278)	70%	26	4
No	(385)	63%	30	6
Region				
Northeast	(118)	64%	31	5
North Central	(254)	69%	24	6
South	(230)	67%	29	5
West	(144)	60%	34	5

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

The majority of respondents expect members of their households to be there for dinner on the weekend, but this is less than on weekdays.

About half of the respondents (54%) feel that everyone must be there for dinner on the weekend. Households where dinner is eaten together everyday expect household members to be present at dinner more often than those who only eat several times a week (66% for those eating together every day compared to 38% for those who eat together three to four times a week). Also, those that consider eating together very important expect everyone to be there (62%) more than those who think it is somewhat important (40%).

About half of those in various age groups (45% - 61%), those with children (56%), working (53%) and non-working females (58%) say they expect weekend attendance at meals.

There is a pattern of regionality for gathering household members for weekend meals too. Only 47% of those in the Northeast require that everyone be present for weekend meals, while 58% of those in the North Central region consider it a requirement.

TABLE 17

REQUIREMENT CONCERNING PRESENCE OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS ON THE WEEKEND

Q. 41: And on the weekend, do you expect everyone to be there for dinner or is it more of an option to be present?

		Requirement on the Weekend		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Everyone Must be There**	**Optional**	**Neither**
Total	(750)	54%	40	6
Frequency of meal preparation				
Nearly everyday	(464)	57%	38	5
Several times a week	(262)	50%	43	6
Number of times house-members eat together in a week				
Three or four	(155)	38%	55	6
Five or six	(178)	41%	53	6
Seven (everyday)	(417)	66%	29	5
Importance of eating together				
Very important	(499)	62%	33	5
Somewhat important	(208)	40%	51	9
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	50%	48	2
25-34	(196)	61%	36	4
35-44	(177)	52%	43	5
45-54	(121)	45%	46	9
55-64	(97)	58%	38	4
65 and over	(95)	59%	32	8
Working/non-working females				
Working females	(329)	53%	41	6
Working females with children under 12	(124)	59%	35	6
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	37%	61	2
Working females with no children	(156)	54%	38	8
Non-working females	(311)	58%	36	6
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	56%	39	4
Teens	(153)	40%	57	3
Non-teens	(278)	62%	33	5
No	(385)	52%	41	7
Region				
Northeast	(118)	47%	46	7
North Central	(254)	58%	36	6
South	(230)	53%	43	3
West	(144)	56%	36	7

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

Half of respondents agree that household members ate their last dinner without entertainment (e.g., television). This is especially true in larger households, in those with younger children and where the female works and has children.

Forty-nine percent of survey participants say no extra entertainment was a part of their last dinner. Four of ten watched television and 8% listened to the radio.

The incidence of watching television is highest in smaller households (47% watched in two-person homes as opposed to 32% in homes with four or more people).

Income makes a difference too. As income rises, television watching declines. For example, 43% of those making less than $20,000 watched, but only one third of respondents with incomes of $50,000 or more did so.

Probably the most interesting point is that households with children, especially a working mother, are less likely to watch television than are their opposing counterparts. For example, in households with children only 35% watched, while 45% of those without children did so. In households with working females and young children, 34% watched; in those with non-working females 44% watched.

TABLE 18

ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE WHILE EATING DINNER

Q. 11: While you ate, which, if any, of the following took place?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Watching TV or VCR	Listening to Radio	Listening to Records/ Tapes/CDs	Reading a Book/ Newspaper/ Magazine	None of These
Total	(750)	40%	8	3	3	49
Number of people in household						
Two	(328)	47%	9	4	3	41
Three	(188)	39%	7	2	4	52
Four or more	(234)	32%	6	2	2	59
Importance of eating together						
Very important	(499)	36%	7	3	2	55
Somewhat important	(208)	47%	11	3	4	40
Income						
Less than $20,000	(118)	43%	11	3	4	47
$20,00 to less than $50,000	(409)	41%	8	3	3	47
$50,000 or more	(126)	33%	3	2	1	62
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	60%	6	2	6	33
25-34	(196)	40%	8	6	5	46
35-44	(177)	34%	8	2	3	56
45-54	(121)	42%	5	2	1	51
55-64	(97)	31%	10	1	2	58
65 and over	(95)	48%	7	3	1	42
Children in household						
Yes	(365)	35%	7	2	3	55
Teens	(153)	39%	7	1	3	55
Non-teens	(278)	32%	7	2	4	58
No	(385)	45%	9	4	3	43
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	41%	6	1	3	51
Working females with children under 12	(124)	34%	5	—	2	59
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	34%	4	1	2	62
Working females with no children	(156)	48%	7	2	3	44
Non-working females	(311)	44%	8	4	2	46

NOTE: Multiple mentions

Even in households where television was watched during dinner, only one in five admitted that television dominated over conversation.

The vast majority who watched television say they either paid attention to the conversation (20%) or to both the television and the conversation equally (60%). Those who say their household only paid attention to the television represent only one in five (19%) of those with the television on during dinner. Again, the incidence of television watching declines with a rise in household size and in households with children.

TABLE 19

LEVEL OF INTERACTION WHILE WATCHING TELEVISION

Q. 11A: While the TV or VCR was on, did the people in your house pay more attention to the TV/VCR, more to the dinner conversation, or both equally?

		Pay more attention to . . .		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Watching TV or VCR**	**Conversation**	**Both Equally**
(Those who watched TV while they ate dinner)	(303)	19%	20	60
Number of people in household				
Two	(155)	21%	23	56
Three	(73)	16%	15	67
Four or more	(75)	17%	21	61
Children in household				
Yes	(128)	17%	16	67
No	(175)	21%	24	55

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

On the average, people spent about a half-hour eating dinner.

The mean time that dinner lasted is 34.31 minutes. As might be expected, weekday dinners were somewhat shorter (32.03 minutes) than those on weekends (36.35 minutes for Friday/Saturday/Sunday). Generally, older respondents lingered a little longer at dinner than did younger respondents. For example, those 25-34 spent a mean of 33.17 minutes while those 55-64 took 35.53 minutes.

Regional differences surfaced. The shortest dinners were in North Central households (32.55 minutes); the longest were in the West (36.74 minutes). Also those in rural areas ate faster (31.09 minutes) than suburban respondents (35.89 minutes).

TABLE 20

HOW LONG DINNER LASTED

Q. 10: About how long did dinner last?

	(Base)	Mean (in minutes)
Total	(750)	34.31
Children in household		
Yes	(365)	33.87
Teens in household	(153)	33.39
Non-teens in household	(278)	33.65
No	(385)	34.73
Age		
Less than 25	(52)	33.65
25-34	(196)	33.17
35-44	(177)	34.12
45-54	(121)	33.79
55-64	(97)	35.53
65 and over	(95)	36.87
Last meal eaten together at home		
Weekday	(383)	32.03
Fri./Sat./Sun..	(364)	36.35
Sunday	(78)	35.36
Metro/non-metro		
City	(272)	34.47
Suburban	(267)	35.89
Rural	(202)	31.09
Region		
Northeast	(118)	35.32
North Central	(254)	32.55
South	(230)	34.16
West	(144)	36.74

SERVING HABITS AT DINNERTIME

Over half of those in respondent households ate dinner in a kitchen/eating area. Three out of ten ate at the dining room table.

Over half (54%) of the respondents served the last dinner meal in the kitchen area. The dining room was chosen one third of the time (31%) and a small group ate on the coffee table in the living room or den (10%). Dinner was served on tray tables in a few cases (6%).

Considering respondents by region, those in the West have the greatest variation in meal locations and are significantly less likely to have eaten in the kitchen. For example, while 59% of those in the Northeast ate in the kitchen area, this is true of only 42% of those in the West. However, these Westerners are the most likely of those in the four regions to have eaten at the dining room table (36%), at the coffee table (16%) and/or on tray tables (8%).

Eating in the kitchen is more a preference for those who tend to eat dinner together everyday (57%) than for those who gather several times a week (51%).

Age does make a difference in dinnertime location. Those 45-54 (58%) and 55-64 (59%) are most likely to have eaten dinner at the kitchen table, those 35-44 (37%) and 45-54 (34%) at the dining room table. Those less than 25 are most likely to have eaten in a variety of places.

Surprisingly, having children increases the probability that dinner will be at the dining room table. While 34% of those with youngsters ate there, only 29% of those without children did so.

TABLE 21

WHERE THE MEAL IS SERVED

Q.16: Did you eat dinner ...?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Location Kitchen Table/ Breakfast Bar/Nook	Dining Room Table	Coffee Table in Living Room/Den	Tray Tables
Total	(750)	54%	31	10	6
Region					
Northeast	(118)	59%	28	6	7
North Central	(254)	59%	27	8	6
South	(230)	54%	33	10	3
West	(144)	42%	36	16	8
Frequency of meal preparation					
Nearly everyday	(464)	57%	30	9	5
Several times a week	(262)	51%	34	11	6
Age					
Less than 25	(52)	50%	21	19	12
25-34	(196)	54%	29	14	4
35-44	(177)	51%	37	8	5
45-54	(121)	58%	34	7	4
55-64	(97)	59%	29	4	7
65 and over	(95)	53%	28	7	9
Children in household					
Yes	(365)	55%	34	8	5
Teens in household	(153)	54%	33	8	7
Non-teens in household	(278)	55%	35	8	4
No	(385)	53%	29	11	7

NOTE: "Another Place" not included
Multiple mentions

The most popular way to serve dinner was from serving dishes at the table, but food put on plates and served from the kitchen ranked a strong second. Weekend serving was the most casual.

The method preferred by the most respondents to serve the last dinner was to have serving dishes at the table (44%). Another common method was to put food on plates served from the kitchen (33%). Buffet style was not as popular (14%) and the method least used was to bring the pots and pans to the table (10%).

While family-style service is most preferred by all age groups except those under 25 it is more popular among those 45 and over. (Fifty-six percent of those 45-54, 55% of the 55-64 year olds and 49% of those 65 and over served dinner family style.) Serving onto plates is the choice of the highest percentage of those less than 25 (46%) and also is favored by those 35-44 (36%) and 65 and over (36%).

Style of serving is affected by income ranges, with family-style growing more popular as income rises. For example, over half of households (51%) with incomes of $50,000 or more agree that they served from dishes at the table, but only 34% of those with incomes under $20,000 did so. Those with the lowest incomes are also the ones who most put food on plates served from the kitchen (39%) or buffet style (20%). The income and age group figures on this issue most likely correlate, since as respondents age their incomes usually rise too.

Households with children or with younger children tended to have a greater mix of serving styles. For example, only 37% of those with non-teens in the household served the meal family style versus 48% of those with no children. However, 37% of those with younger children served onto plates compared with 31% who have no children.

Those who place greater importance on dinner together (50%) and who prepare meals nearly everyday (47%) are especially likely to have served the meal family style at the table.

For the Sunday meal, respondents tended to put food onto plates served from the kitchen less often (27% on Sundays compared to 35% during the week) and used the buffet style more (19% on Sundays compared to 11% during the week).

Serving styles vary by region. Those in the West (48%) and South (46%) were the most likely to use serving dishes at the table. That was the style in only 39% of households in the Northeast and 42% of those in the North Central region. Conversely those in the Northeast and North Central posted the highest percentages for putting food on plates served from the kitchen. One interesting sidelight is that Southern households are more prone to use buffet style (17%) but less likely to serve from pots and pans at the table (6%).

TABLE 22

HOW FOOD WAS SERVED

Q. 12: Again, thinking about the last dinner you had at home, was it served ...?

		Method Used			
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	From Serving Dishes at the Table	Onto Plates Served from the Kitchen	Buffet Style	From Pots and Pans at at the Table
Total	(750)	44%	33	14	10
Age					
Less than 25	(52)	19%	46	25	12
25-34	(196)	38%	35	12	16
35-44	(177)	41%	36	15	10
45-54	(121)	56%	20	12	9
55-64	(97)	55%	27	12	6
65 and over	(95)	49%	36	12	4
Children in household					
Yes	(365)	39%	34	15	13
Teens in household	(153)	43%	29	18	10
Non-teens in household	(278)	37%	37	13	14
No	(385)	48%	31	13	8
Income					
Less than $20,000	(118)	34%	39	20	7
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	44%	31	13	12
$50,000 or more	(126)	51%	32	11	6
Importance of eating together					
Very important	(499)	50%	29	11	11
Somewhat important	(208)	35%	38	17	9
Frequency of meal preparation					
Nearly everyday	(464)	47%	30	13	10
Several times a week	(262)	39%	37	15	11
Last week eaten together at home					
Weekday	(383)	46%	35	11	9
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	42%	31	16	11
Sunday	(78)	44%	27	19	10
Region					
Northeast	(118)	39%	37	10	13
North Central	(254)	42%	35	12	12
South	(230)	46%	31	17	6
West	(144)	48%	28	14	11

NOTE: "Some Other Ways" and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions

Although everyday dinnerware was the norm, nearly one household in ten took out the good china at dinnertime.

Most respondents say they used everyday dinnerware for the last dinner served at home (85%). Nearly one household in ten (9%) agrees that good china was used for the dinner. The incidence of using plastic or paper plates is minimal (3% each). There was little difference between weekday and weekend usage.

In general everyday dinnerware was used by a higher percentage of those in younger age groups. For example, 90% of those under 25 and 87% of the 25-34 year olds used everyday dinnerware compared to 79% of those 65 and over. Good china was used more frequently by older groups (12% of the 45-54 year olds used it compared to 5% of the 25-34 year olds) and by those without children (good china was used by 13% of those without children versus 4% with children).

Rural respondents (90%) were more likely than city (84%) or suburban (83%) to use everyday dinnerware.

Also, respondents who say that eating together is very important tended to use good china more often (10%) than those who don't think it is that important (5%).

TABLE 23

TYPE OF PLATES USED FOR THE MEAL

Q. 13: And were the plates that you used ...?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Type of Plates Used Everyday Dinnerware	Good China	Plastic	Paper
Total	(750)	85%	9	3	3
Last meal eaten together at home					
Weekday	(383)	85%	9	2	3
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	84%	8	5	3
Sunday	(78)	83%	8	6	3
Age					
Less than 25	(52)	90%	4	4	2
25-34	(196)	87%	5	4	4
35-44	(177)	85%	6	4	6
45-54	(121)	85%	12	1	2
55-64	(97)	84%	11	4	1
65 and over	(95)	79%	17	3	1
Children in household					
Yes	(365)	86%	4	5	5
Teens in household	(153)	88%	3	3	5
Non-teens in household	(278)	85%	4	6	5
No	(385)	83%	13	2	2
Metro/non-metro					
City	(272)	84%	10	3	3
Suburban	(267)	83%	9	4	4
Rural	(202)	90%	5	2	2
Importance of eating together					
Very important	(499)	85%	10	2	3
Somewhat important	(208)	87%	5	5	3

NOTE: "No Plates Used" not included

Most used everyday utensils for the meals. As with good china, good utensils were used in about one out of ten homes.

The large majority (88%) used everyday utensils for the last meal served at home. A smaller group reported using good utensils (11%). The use of plastic utensils was practically nonexistent (1%).

The incidence of respondents saying they used good utensils is especially high among those 65 and over (27% of this older group used good utensils compared to 5% in the 25-34 age group). Use generally rises with age (e.g., 12% of those 45-54 used good utensils). It is also highest among those without children (15%) and when the meal was on a Sunday (14%).

TABLE 24

UTENSILS USED FOR THE MEAL

Q. 14: Did you use good utensils, everyday utensils or plastic utensils?

		Type of Utensil Used		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Everyday**	**Good**	**Plastic**
Total	(750)	88%	11	1
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	88%	10	2
25-34	(196)	94%	5	1
35-44	(177)	92%	7	—
45-54	(121)	88%	12	—
55-64	(97)	87%	13	—
65 and over	(95)	69%	27	3
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	92%	7	1
Teens in household	(153)	94%	5	1
Non-teens in household	(278)	91%	7	1
No	(385)	84%	15	1
Last meal eaten together at home				
Weekday	(383)	89%	10	1
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	87%	12	1
Sunday	(78)	86%	14	—

NOTE: "No Utensils Used" and "Don't Know/No Answer" not included

Paper napkins were used by most. Cloth appeared more in older households, whereas napkins were less likely to be used at all in the under 25 group.

Paper napkins were used by 84% of respondents during the last dinner served at home. About one in ten (9%) had no napkin; 7% used the cloth variety.

Generally as age rises, the use of cloth napkins increases. For example, while only 2% of the under 25 group used cloth, 11% of the 45-54 year olds did so. Conversely the younger the group, the more likelihood there is that no napkins were used (13% of those under 25 used no napkins versus 6% of the 45-54 year olds.)

TABLE 25

TYPE OF NAPKINS USED

Q. 15: And were the napkins paper, cloth, or did you not use any?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Type Used Paper	No Napkin Used	Cloth
Total	(750)	84%	9	7
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	85%	13	2
25-34	(196)	85%	11	5
35-44	(177)	86%	9	5
45-54	(121)	83%	6	11
55-64	(97)	85%	5	10
65 and over	(95)	83%	7	9
Children in household				
Yes	(365)	85%	10	4
Teens in household	(153)	85%	12	3
Non-teens in household	(278)	84%	10	5
No	(385)	84%	7	9
Last meal eaten together at home				
Weekday	(383)	84%	9	8
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	85%	9	6
Sunday	(78)	85%	12	4

Most respondents used placemats or no table covering.

Almost an equal number of survey participants say they used placemats (39%) or chose not to use any table covering (37%); 13% had a linen tablecloth and 12% opted for a plastic cloth.

Those 45 and over are more likely to use placemats, those under 45 are more likely to use no table covering. For example, while 44% of the 25-34 year olds placed nothing on the table, that was true of only 26% of the 55-64 year olds. The incidence of use of a linen tablecloth generally rises with age. While 6% of those 25-34 used a linen cloth, 16% of those 45-54 did so.

Table covering habits do change by income. For instance, those making less than $20,000 (36%) were less likely to use placemats than those in households making $50,000 or more (45%). The under $20,000 households, however, were much more likely to use plastic tablecloths (21%) than are those of $50,000 and over (6%).

Respondents with children (43%) are more likely than those without (31%) to have used no table covering.

TABLE 26

TYPE OF SETTING

Q. 17: Was the table set with ...?

		Type Used			
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Placemats**	**Nothing**	**Linen Tablecloth**	**Plastic Tablecloth**
(Those respondents who eat at a table)	(708)	39%	37	13	12
Age					
Less than 25	(46)	26%	43	15	15
25-34	(190)	37%	44	6	12
35-44	(168)	38%	41	12	10
45-54	(117)	44%	32	16	7
55-64	(90)	39%	26	22	16
65 and over	(86)	48%	23	15	17
Income					
Less than $20,000	(112)	36%	38	10	21
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(383)	40%	37	11	11
$50,000 or more	(122)	45%	34	16	6
Children in household					
Yes	(350)	33%	43	11	13
Teens in household	(144)	32%	42	15	12
Non-teens in household	(270)	32%	45	9	13
No	(358)	45%	31	15	10

NOTE: "Paper Tablecloth," "Other," and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions

More than four of ten survey participants say they used table accessories at dinner; one in five had a centerpiece.

While 56% used no table decoration, 44% of survey participants did opt for one. The highest percentage preferred a centerpiece (21%), flowers (15%) and/or candles (11%).

Those 35 and over are more likely than those younger to have chosen a centerpiece for dinner. For example, while 15% of those 25-34 had a centerpiece, that was true of 29% of survey participants 45-54. Respondents under 45 were more likely to opt for no table decoration than were those older. For instance, 58% of those 25-34 had no table accessory, but that was true of 48% of 45-54 year olds.

The presence or absence of children and the work status of women impacts table decorations. For example, six of ten households with children had no table decoration versus only 51% of households without children. While 63% of working females with children under 12 had no decoration, the case is similar for non-working women (60%). Yet, working women (54%) were less likely to have had a bare table than non-working women (60%).

Regionality has an influence on decoration. For example, respondents in the South were more likely to have a centerpiece (27%) and less likely to have a bare table (49%) than are those in the West where only 13% opted for a centerpiece and 64% chose no table decoration at all.

TABLE 27

TABLE DECORATIONS

Q. 18: In addition to the table setting, was there anything else on the table, like a centerpiece, candles, flowers or other things?

(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Decorations Used** **Centerpiece**	**Flowers**	**Candles**	**None/ Nothing**
(Those respondents who eat-at table)	(708)	21%	15	11	56
Age					
Less than 25	(46)	15%	15	11	57
25-34	(190)	15%	15	16	58
35-44	(168)	22%	12	5	60
45-54	(117)	29%	14	15	48
55-64	(90)	28%	17	9	54
65 and over	(86)	21%	19	9	55
Children in household					
Yes	(350)	17%	15	10	60
Teens in household	(144)	17%	17	10	60
Non-teens in household	(270)	17%	14	10	60
No	(358)	26%	14	12	51
Working/non-working females					
Working females	(307)	22%	15	13	54
Working females with children under 12	(120)	17%	13	11	63
Working females with teen(s)	(78)	21%	19	13	54
Working females with no children	(141)	29%	13	16	47
Non-working females	(299)	18%	16	8	60
Region					
Northeast	(110)	24%	6	14	56
North Central	(239)	20%	15	10	57
South	(223)	27%	21	10	49
West	(133)	13%	11	12	64

NOTE: "Fruit/Fruit Bowl," "Other," "Don't Know/No Answer" not included
Multiple mentions

Only one main dish was served for the entire family.

Almost everyone (93%) says they served only one main dish during the last dinner served at home. There is little variation across age groups or other population segments.

TABLE 28

NUMBER OF MAIN DISHES SERVED

Q. 21: Did everyone at dinner eat the same main dish, or were different dishes served to different people?

		One or More Main Dishes Served	
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Everyone Same Dish	Different Dishes
Total	(750)	93%	7%
Last meal eaten together at home			
Weekday	(383)	93%	7
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	93%	7
Sunday	(78)	94%	5
Working/children			
Working female with children	(173)	90%	10
Working female without children	(156)	95%	5
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	92%	8
25-34	(196)	89%	11
35-44	(177)	95%	5
45-54	(121)	94%	5
55-64	(97)	94%	5
65 and over	(95)	94%	6
Children in household			
Yes	(365)	92%	8
No	(385)	94%	6
Region			
Northeast	(118)	93%	7
North Central	(254)	94%	6
South	(230)	91%	9
West	(144)	92%	7
Metro/non-metro			
City	(272)	89%	11
Suburb	(267)	95%	5
Rural	(202)	95%	4

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

DINNER MENU

Almost one in five households served an appetizer before the meal.

The incidence of serving appetizers increases as the number of times people eat together decreases (21% among those who eat together three or four times a week compared to 15% for those who eat together everyday), possibly because those eating together less frequently may consider dinner together more of a special occasion. A higher percentage of respondents served appetizers on Sunday (22% on Sunday compared to 16% during the week), and younger people in general served more appetizers (27% in the less than 25 group compared to 15% in the 65 and over category). Childless households, particularly those with working females, also are more likely to serve appetizers.

Appetizers are served more by those in urban areas. Survey participants in the rural areas are less likely to serve appetizers (15%) than those who live in cities (19%). Comparing regional areas the North Central zone has a much lower incidence of appetizers served before dinner (9% compared to approximately 20% for the rest of the country).

Salads are the preferred first course (35%) followed by soups (19%) and lastly, meat (14%).

NOTE: In this report, first course or appetizers are used interchangeably to describe the same type of food.

TABLE 29

FIRST COURSE OR APPETIZER SERVED

Q. 19: The last time you had dinner together at home, did the meal include a first course or appetizer?

Q. 19a: If so, what was served as a first course or appetizer?

		Served First Course or Appetizer			Type of Food Served		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Yes**	**No**		**Salad**	**Soup**	**Meat**
Total	(750)	17%	83	(126)	35%	19	14
Number of times household members eat together in a week							
Three or four	(155)	21%	79				
Five or six	(178)	16%	84				
Seven (everyday)	(417)	15%	84				
Last meal eaten together at home							
Weekday	(383)	16%	84				
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	17%	82				
Sunday	(78)	22%	77				
Working/children							
Working females with children	(173)	11%	89				
Working females without children	(156)	22%	78				
Age							
Less than 25	(52)	27%	73				
25-34	(196)	15%	85				
35-44	(177)	18%	82				
45-54	(121)	12%	88				
55-64	(97)	20%	80				
65 and over	(95)	15%	83				
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	15%	85				
Teens	(153)	18%	82				
Non-teens	(278)	15%	85				
No	(385)	18%	81				
Region							
Northeast	(118)	22%	77				
North Central	(254)	9%	91				
South	(230)	19%	80				
West	(144)	22%	78				
Metro/Non-metro							
City	(272)	19%	81				
Suburb	(267)	16%	84				
Rural	(202)	15%	85				

NOTE: Main mentions

Meat was far more popular than poultry, pasta and/or fish when the last dinner was served.

More than four of ten (44%) respondents say they served meat during the last dinner they had together. About one-fourth (23%) served poultry and much smaller segments served pasta/spaghetti (10%) and fish/seafood (7%).

Meat is more likely to be served on weekdays (49%) than on weekends (40%). The reverse is true for poultry; 26% served poultry on a weekend and 19% on weekdays.

Those 45 and over are somewhat more likely to favor beef (e.g., 23% of the 35-44 year olds served beef but 31% of the 45-54 year olds did). Those under 25 (33%) are the most prone of all the age groups to have served poultry.

There are regional preferences and differences by income range in the types of main dishes served. Beef is most popular in the South (29% served it); poultry is preferred most often in the Northeast (31% served it). Beef consumption declines as income rises. The percentage who served beef at dinner is highest (34%) among those making less than $20,000 and lowest (22%) among those making $50,000 or more. Those making $50,000 or more are most prone to have served poultry (31%) and/or pasta (13%).

TABLE 30

TYPE OF FOOD SERVED FOR MAIN DISH

Q. 22: And what was served for the main course(s)?

		Type of Food Served								
		Meat				Poultry				
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Total	Beef	Pork	Other	Total	Chicken	Other	Pasta/ Spaghetti	Fish/ Seafood
Total	(750)	44%	25	13	7	23	20	4	10	7
Last meal eaten together at home										
Weekday	(383)	49%	28	15	7	19	16	3	9	7
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	40%	23	10	8	26	23	3	10	7
Sunday	(78)	37%	28	8	1	32	28	4	9	3
Age										
Less than 25	(52)	35%	13	15	6	33	33	—	13	6
25-34	(196)	44%	26	10	9	21	20	1	14	5
35-44	(177)	42%	23	15	7	24	23	1	9	7
45-54	(121)	50%	31	12	8	21	18	3	5	7
55-64	(97)	45%	27	12	6	28	19	9	7	8
65 and over	(95)	47%	27	16	5	14	9	4	8	12
Region										
Northeast	(118)	42%	23	11	9	31	29	3	8	8
North Central	(254)	44%	24	13	9	23	19	4	11	5
South	(230)	47%	29	13	7	23	20	2	9	8
West	(144)	42%	26	14	3	15	15	1	11	8
Income										
Less than $20,000	(118)	47%	34	8	8	23	19	4	9	7
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	45%	24	14	7	20	17	3	8	8
$50,000 or more	(126)	41%	22	13	6	31	29	2	13	6

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

The majority of households served vegetables and/or bread with the meal.

Vegetables (58%) and bread or bread products (rolls, biscuits, muffins, crackers) (54%) are the preferred type of food served with the main dish. Other types of food served include the following:

Potato	41%
Salad	30
Gravy/sauce	17
Relish/condiment	11
Rice	10
Pasta/spaghetti	6

Vegetable usage increases as respondent age and income rise. (Forty-eight percent of those less than 25 served vegetables; 58% of those 35-44 did so; that's true of 63% of those 65 and over.) Fifty-one percent with incomes less than $20,000 served vegetables, but 67% of those earning $50,000 or more say that was the case. As might be expected usage of salad at the dinner meal follows the same pattern. However, the usage of potatoes shows the opposite pattern among the income groups. (Forty-five percent of those making less than $20,000 served potatoes; but for only 38% of those earning $50,000 or more was this the case.)

Vegetables are also more popular in the Northeast (64%) and in the South (66%) than in the other regions. Other regional preferences are for gravies and sauces in the South (20%), and for rice in the Northeast (15%) and West (13%).

TABLE 31

OTHER FOOD SERVED WITH MAIN DISH
- AIDED AND UNAIDED COMBINED -

Q. 23/23A: What, if anything, was served with the main dish?
Combined aided and unaided.

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Type of Food Served with Main Dish							
		Vege-table	Breads/ Rolls/ Biscuits/ Muffins/ Crackers	Potato	Salad	Gravy/ Sauce	Relish/ Condi-ment	Rice	Pasta/ Spaghetti
Total	(750)	58%	54	41	30	17	11	10	6
Region									
Northeast	(118)	64%	47	40	25	15	15	15	6
North Central	(254)	52%	55	40	30	15	9	8	7
South	(230)	66%	64	43	30	20	10	8	7
West	(144)	53%	42	41	32	17	9	13	4
Age									
Less than 25	(52)	48%	52	42	19	21	8	21	8
25-34	(196)	57%	56	34	21	13	9	13	7
35-44	(177)	58%	50	44	31	17	14	11	5
45-54	(121)	59%	50	49	35	22	9	10	4
55-64	(97)	60%	58	46	38	15	7	5	7
65 and over	(95)	63%	62	34	37	20	15	4	8
Children in household									
Yes	(365)	56%	54	40	24	16	13	13	6
Teens	(153)	54%	59	42	24	14	16	10	6
Non-teens	(278)	57%	53	39	24	17	12	14	6
No	(385)	60%	54	42	35	19	8	7	7
Income									
Less than $20,000	(118)	51%	61	45	27	19	13	10	5
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	58%	53	41	29	18	10	10	5
$50,000 or more	(126)	67%	48	38	38	12	14	11	8

NOTE: Multiple mentions
Main mentions

The most popular beverages served during the dinner were milk, soda, tea and water.

More than a third (36%) of all households served milk as a beverage during the dinner meal. Other popular beverages served include the following: —

Soda	24%
Tea	21
Tap water	20

The beverages served less frequently include coffee (11%), juice (9%) and mineral water (7%).

The incidence of milk consumption predictably fluctuates across population segments. As might be expected, it is significantly higher in homes with children (48% compared to 25% in homes without children), and highest in households with young children (51% of these served milk). Similarly, in the age groups most likely to have children at home, the percentage choosing milk is highest. (Fifty-two percent served milk in 25-34 year old households and 42% in 35-44 year old households.)

Milk consumption is affected by regionality. It was most likely served at dinner in the North Central (44%) and Western (42%) households.

Soda consumption increases in homes with children (30% served it) and in the younger age groups (40% served it among those less than 25). It was also served by a higher percentage at Sunday dinners (35%).

Generally, coffee and tea consumption go up as age increases. For example, only 2% of the 25-34 year olds served coffee compared to 29% of those 65 and over. Respondents are less likely also to have served coffee in homes with children. (Sixteen percent of homes without children served coffee versus 6% of homes with children.)

Coffee consumption declines as income rises. (Fourteen percent of those with incomes of less than $20,000 served coffee; only 8% of survey participants making $50,000 or more did so.)

Those in the South (37%) were by far the most likely to have poured tea at dinner.

TABLE 32

BEVERAGES SERVED DURING THE MEAL

Q. 20: What beverages, if any, were served during the dinner? Please do not include beverages served at the end of the meal.

		Beverages Served						
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Milk	Soda	Tea	Tap Water	Coffee	Juice	Mineral Water
Total	(750)	36%	24	21	20	11	9	7
Last meal eaten together at home								
Weekday	(383)	34%	21	21	23	10	9	8
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	39%	28	21	17	12	8	7
Sunday	(78)	35%	35	19	19	13	6	3
Age								
Less than 25	(52)	33%	40	15	15	2	10	6
25-34	(196)	52%	27	16	16	2	12	8
35-44	(177)	42%	32	16	18	6	11	9
45-54	(121)	34%	26	26	22	15	6	7
55-64	(97)	23%	16	29	27	23	6	5
65 and over	(95)	16%	6	28	27	29	1	3
Children in household								
Yes	(365)	48%	30	19	17	6	11	8
Teens	(153)	43%	34	22	15	6	9	8
Non-teens	(278)	51%	27	18	19	4	12	8
No	(385)	25%	19	23	23	16	6	7
Region								
Northeast	(118)	32%	30	15	16	8	11	11
North Central	(254)	44%	23	16	27	15	7	6
South	(230)	27%	24	37	18	10	7	5
West	(144)	42%	22	11	15	10	13	10
Income								
Less than $20,000	(118)	28%	30	21	18	14	10	4
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	41%	23	22	19	11	7	9
$50,000 or more	(126)	34%	27	18	23	8	14	8

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

A variety of desserts, mostly sweets, ended the meal in nearly half of the households.

Almost half of the respondents say they served dessert after dinner (47%). The most preferred type of dessert is ice cream/frozen dessert (13%). Other types of desserts served include the following:

Cake	8%
Fruit	7
Cookies	7
Pie	6
Gelatin/Pudding	6

Age is a factor when serving dessert. In general, percentages rise with age. For example, while 43% of 25-34 year olds served dessert, that's true of 51% of those 55-64. Interestingly, while about the same percentage say they ate ice cream/frozen dessert (10%-15% up to age 64), those over 44 are more likely to have served fruit and those over 54 to have served pie.

Surprisingly, the presence of children has little effect on the likelihood of serving dessert after the meal.

Dessert popularity is relatively high in the Northeast (52%) and relatively low in the West (43%).

TABLE 33

DESSERT SERVED AT THE END OF THE MEAL

Q. 24: At the end of the meal, what kind of dessert, if any, was served?

		Desserts Served							
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Any Dessert	Ice Cream/ Frozen Dessert	Cake	Fruit	Gelatin/ Cookies	Pie	Pudding	None
Total	(750)	47%	13	8	7	7	6	6	53
Age									
Less than 25	(52)	35%	10	12	4	6	2	4	65
25-34	(196)	43%	14	7	4	6	5	5	57
35-44	(177)	49%	15	7	6	7	4	6	51
45-54	(121)	45%	11	14	10	2	3	6	55
55-64	(97)	51%	12	3	12	7	14	5	49
65 and over	(95)	64%	8	11	14	16	12	8	36
Regions									
Northeast	(118)	52%	11	14	11	7	6	6	48
North Central	(254)	46%	11	7	11	7	4	6	54
South	(230)	49%	11	9	5	6	10	6	50
West	(144)	43%	17	5	3	8	3	5	57
Children in household									
Yes	(365)	46%	13	9	5	6	5	5	53
Teens	(153)	48%	12	12	8	4	6	5	52
Non-teens	(278)	47%	14	8	5	7	5	5	53
No	(385)	48%	12	8	10	8	8	6	52

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

Most respondents did not serve a beverage immediately after the meal. Those who did generally served coffee.

Coffee is preferred by 17% of respondents. Survey participants who served coffee generally poured regular (13%) over decaffeinated (4%). A smaller number say they served tea (5%) or milk (2%). Three-fourths (75%) of the respondents did not serve any beverage after dinner.

Preference for coffee at the end of the meal:

- increases with age (28% of those 65 and over served it versus 10% of those 25-34).
- is greater in homes without children (23% of those without children poured coffee after dinner but only 10% in households with children did so).
- is highest in the North Central region (19%).

Tea consumption is by far the highest (13% served it) in the Northeast.

TABLE 34

BEVERAGES SERVED AT END OF MEAL

Q. 25: And, were there any hot or cold beverages served at the end of the meal?

Q. 25a: If so, what were they?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Beverages Served					No Beverage Served
		Coffee					
		Total	Reg.	Decaf.	Tea	Milk	
Total	(750)	17%	13	4	5	2	75
Last meal eaten together at home							
Weekday	(383)	16%	11	5	3	3	77
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	18%	15	3	6	2	72
Sunday	(78)	22%	18	4	8	4	64
Age							
Less than 25	(52)	10%	8	—	10	2	71
25-34	(196)	11%	8	2	3	2	80
35-44	(177)	12%	9	3	2	3	82
45-54	(121)	24%	19	5	4	1	69
55-64	(97)	26%	18	7	8	2	67
65 and over	(95)	28%	19	9	6	3	64
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	11%	8	2	3	3	81
Teens	(153)	10%	7	2	3	3	82
Non-teens	(278)	11%	9	3	3	4	80
No	(385)	23%	17	6	6	2	69
Working/non-working females							
Working females with children	(173)	12%	8	3	1	2	81
Working females without children	(156)	20%	15	4	8	1	71
Region							
Northeast	(118)	17%	13	2	13	3	66
North Central	(254)	19%	13	6	1	2	77
South	(230)	15%	10	4	3	2	79
West	(144)	18%	15	3	7	2	72

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

Probably as a shortcut, about one in five respondents used food made at home in advance and frozen; nearly one in six relied on take-out foods from a supermarket counter or a food store.

Nineteen percent served homemade food from the freezer; 14% selected take-out foods from a supermarket, 7% chose prepackaged refrigerated items and 3% decided on take-out or delivery from a restaurant or fast food establishment.

Not surprisingly, the youngest respondents whose households are likely not solidified yet are the biggest users of these convenience options. (Sixty-percent of those under 25 used one or more of the selections noted above compared to 35% of the total.) Take-out from a supermarket was by far the convenience option most chosen by those in this age group (37% ate supermarket take-out). Among those in other age groups under 65, 12%-15% used that option.

Interesting here is that though working females are likely to be busier than non-working females there's virtually no difference in their use of convenience options (35% of working versus 34% of non-working females used one of these). There isn't even a difference in the percentage of working versus non-working women who used food made and frozen in advance (the percentage is 18% for both), indicating that both groups plan ahead for dinners.

There are some regional differences. Those in the Northeast are the most prone to use any of the convenience options noted (42% used one or more in the Northeast versus 30% in the West). Those in this group were more likely to have used the fix-and-freeze choice (24%) than those in other regions. Supermarket takeout was highest in the Northeast and South (16%). Prepackaged heat-and-serve items were most likely to be used in the Northeast and West, but this might be affected by regional availablities.

TABLE 35

TYPE OF FOOD USED IN PREPARING DINNER

Q. 28: When you prepared the meal, did you use any of the following ...?

		Type of Food Used				
	(Base)	Foods Home-made in Advance and Frozen	Take-Out Foods from a Super-market Counter or Food Store	Prepackaged Heat-and-Serve Foods that Were Not Frozen	Take-Out/ Delivery from Res-taurant, Pizzeria or Fast Food Place	Did Not Use Any
Total	(750)	19%	14	7	3	65
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	27%	37	21	8	40
25-34	(196)	15%	12	5	3	70
35-44	(177)	19%	12	8	2	66
45-54	(121)	18%	15	9	5	61
55-64	(97)	19%	12	3	1	67
65 and over	(95)	20%	9	6	—	69
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	18%	12	9	3	65
Working females with children under 12	(124)	20%	10	4	4	68
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	20%	12	7	2	68
Working females with no children	(156)	16%	11	12	2	64
Non-working females	(311)	18%	13	7	2	66
Children in household						
Yes	(365)	18%	15	6	3	66
Teens	(153)	16%	16	7	3	67
Non-teens	(278)	19%	13	5	3	67
No	(385)	19%	13	9	2	64
Regions						
Northeast	(118)	24%	16	12	3	58
North Central	(254)	19%	13	5	4	68
South	(230)	20%	16	7	2	62
West	(144)	14%	10	10	3	70

NOTE: Multiple mentions

About half of the respondents say they used canned products in preparing dinner.

Fifty-one percent agreed that they used canned products when they prepared dinner. Sixty percent of these used canned vegetables/potatoes, 23% other canned foods and 20% packaged mixes.

The younger the respondents are, the more prone they are to use canned products. For example, 59% of the 25-34 year olds used canned food, but only 37% of the 65 and older group did so. Possibly to help in solving the time crunch, working females (54%) are more likely to use canned products than are their non-working (47%) counterparts. This figure jumps to 60% among working females with teens.

Children in a household translates into more use of canned goods. Fifty-three percent with children versus 49% without children used these items.

There is a definite regional pattern for canned good use. The highest usage is in the North Central states (56% used) while the lowest is in the West (41% used).

TABLE 36

CANNED PRODUCTS USED IN PREPARING DINNER

Q. 26: In preparing dinner, were any canned goods or packaged convenience foods used?

Q. 26A: If so, what were they?

		Used Canned Products			Type of Canned/Packaged Products Used		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Yes	No		Canned Vegetables/ Potatoes	Other Canned Foods	Packaged Mixes
Total	(750)	51%	49	(380)*	60%	23	20
Age							
Less than 25	(52)	58%	40	(30)	70%	17	13
25-34	(196)	59%	41	(116)	59%	31	18
35-44	(177)	52%	46	(92)	58%	21	33
45-54	(121)	48%	52	(58)	53%	26	16
55-64	(97)	46%	54	(45)	62%	20	18
65 and over	(95)	37%	63	(35)	69%	14	9
Working/non-working females							
Working females	(329)	54%	45	(177)	58%	25	21
Working females with children under 12	(124)	53%	44	(66)	53%	30	15
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	60%	38	(49)	45%	27	29
Working females with no children	(156)	53%	47	(83)	64%	22	19
Non-working females	(311)	47%	52	(147)	58%	22	21
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	53%	46	(192)	56%	24	23
Teens	(153)	52%	46	(80)	48%	26	25
Non-teens	(278)	54%	45	(150)	59%	25	21
No	(385)	49%	51	(188)	64%	22	16
Regions							
Northeast	(118)	44%	54	(52)	60%	21	19
North Central	(254)	56%	44	(141)	61%	23	21
South	(230)	55%	45	(126)	61%	21	20
West	(144)	41%	58	(59)	56%	34	19

NOTE: "Canned Meat or Fish," "Other," "Don't Know" not included
*Base = Those respondents who used canned products
*Multiple mentions

Frozen packaged foods were used in preparing dinner in about a quarter of all households.

Respondents in 27% of participant households agreed they used frozen food. Of these, the highest percentage (79%) prepared frozen vegetables/potatoes. The mid-age households are more prone to have used these frozen packaged foods than are those in other age groups. Thirty-three percent of the 35-44 year olds and 31% of the 45-54 year olds prepared these.

Packaged frozen foods are used most frequently in the Northeast (31%) and least in the South (25%).

TABLE 37

FROZEN PACKAGED FOODS USED IN PREPARING DINNER

Q. 27: And, did you use any packaged frozen foods in preparing dinner?

Q. 27A: If so, what were they?

		Used Frozen Packaged Foods			Type of Frozen Packaged Food Used		
	(Base)	Yes	No		Frozen Vegetables/ Potatoes	Frozen Dinners/ Entrees	Other Frozen Foods
Total	(750)	27%	72	(204)*	79%	16	4
Age							
Less than 25	(52)	17%	83				
25-34	(196)	27%	73				
35-44	(177)	33%	66				
45-54	(121)	31%	69				
55-64	(97)	22%	78				
65 and over	(95)	23%	76				
Working/non-working females							
Working females	(329)	31%	68				
Working females with children under 12	(124)	34%	65				
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	34%	65				
Working females with no children	(156)	29%	70				
Non-working females	(311)	23%	77				
Children in household							
Yes	(365)	29%	70				
Teens	(153)	29%	71				
Non-teens	(278)	30%	69				
No	(385)	25%	74				
Regions							
Northeast	(118)	31%	68				
North Central	(254)	27%	72				
South	(230)	25%	75				
West	(144)	28%	72				

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included
*Base = Those respondents who used frozen packaged foods
*Multiple mentions

When serving a quick dinner, many meal preparers choose to serve hamburgers, pasta and sandwiches as the main dish.

Respondents mention that three popular foods they prepare as a main dish for a quick dinner together at home are hamburgers (20%), pasta (18%) and sandwiches/Sloppy Joes (14%). Other quick meals include the following:

Soup	12%
Poultry	10
Beef/steak	9
Pizza	8

Quick entrees that are served less frequently by respondent households are hot dogs (5%), seafood (5%) and salad (4%).

Those in households with children are significantly more likely than those without youngsters to serve hamburgers (23% with children versus 17% without), pizza (11% versus 6%) and hot dogs (8% versus 3%). Those without children are more prone to serve soup (14% without children versus 9% with youngsters) and/or beef/steak (11% versus 7%).

Income makes a difference in quick meal choice selections. Those making less than $20,000 are most prone to select hamburgers (22%), pasta (21%) and soup (17%). On the other hand those making $50,000 or more are the most likely to pick pasta (19%), poultry (19%) and sandwiches/Sloppy Joes (18%).

TABLE 38

TYPE OF FOOD SERVED FOR A QUICK DINNER

Q. 42: In general, when you need to have a quick dinner together at home, what are you usually likely to serve as a main dish? Please tell me specifically what kind of food you would be most likely to prepare.

		Children				Age						Income		
(Table Reads Down)	(Total)	Yes	Teens	Non-teens	No	Less than 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and Over	Less than $20,000	$20,000 to Less than $50,000	$50,000 or More
Type of food served	(750)	(365)	(153)	(278)	(385)	(52)	(196)	(177)	(121)	(97)	(95)	(118)	(409)	(126)
Hamburgers	20%	23%	25%	23%	17%	21%	17%	27%	17%	24%	15%	22%	21%	17%
Pasta/spaghetti macaroni/other	18	19	18	22	17	21	20	21	12	13	19	21	17	19
Sandwiches/ Sloppy Joes	14	15	17	15	14	15	16	15	21	10	6	14	14	18
Soup	12	9	11	8	14	10	7	11	21	8	16	17	12	13
Poultry	10	8	9	8	11	10	6	10	14	13	8	10	8	19
Beef/steak	9	7	8	6	11	4	8	6	7	10	20	7	8	10
Pizza	8	11	8	13	6	4	11	10	10	3	3	5	8	9
Hot dogs	5	8	8	6	3	12	5	10	3	1	2	4	7	6
Fish/seafood	5	2	3	2	7	2	3	2	7	7	8	3	6	5
Salad	4	2	3	1	6	4	3	3	6	5	4	2	4	5

NOTE: Main mentions
Multiple mentions

Homemade, frozen and take-out options are used by the highest percentage of respondents for a quick dinner.

One-third (34%) say they're likely to use homemade food, 32% frozen and 20% take-out when choosing food for a quick dinner. Canned foods (15%), packaged mixes (8%), prepackaged heat-and-serve foods (7%) and microwave dinners/entrees (2%) are selected by a lower percentage.

By focusing solely on the totals, it looks as though homemade food for quick dinners is the option most likely selected by those over 45. For example, 32% of those 25-34 use this option compared to 38% of the 55-64 year olds. Looking closer, however, notice that a higher percentage of the 25-34 year olds (31%) selected homemade foods alone (not frozen homemade) than did any age group except those 65 and over.

Those without children (36%) are more prone to use homemade foods than those with children (31%). The most interesting usage may be among working women with children under 12. Though it's likely that these women live extremely busy lives, 38% of them agree they use homemade food for a quick dinner, the highest of any work-related segment shown and significantly higher than the percentage for working females with no children (28%) who say they choose this option.

Turning to the frozen category, in general a higher percentage of those over 44 agree they use frozen foods than is true of those younger. Those with teens are more likely to pluck a dish from the freezer than those with younger children. Thirty-five percent of those with teens agree versus 27% of those with non-teens; 39% of working women with teens choose frozen compared to 28% of working women with children under 12.

Take-out/delivery, whether from a restaurant or a supermarket, is the most popular among the younger age groups. For example, 23% of the 25-34 year olds rely on take-out while only 11% of the 55-64 year olds do so. Those with children (22%) and working females with young children (23%) are most prone to select take-out.

TABLE 39

WHERE LIKELY TO GET FOOD FOR A QUICK DINNER

Q.43: And where would you be likely to get it from? That is, would it be from a can, or a package? Would it be frozen? Would it be from take-out? What would it be?

		Age						Children				Working/Non-Working Females				
(Table Reads Down)	Total	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and Over	Yes	Teens	Non-teens	No	Working Females	Working Females With Children Under 12	Working Females with Teen(s)	Working Females With Children	Non-Working Females
Base	(750)	(52)	(196)	(177)	(121)	(97)	(95)	(365)	(153)	(278)	(385)	(329)	(124)	(82)	(156)	(311)
Where likely to get food																
Homemade (net)	**34%**	**27%**	**32%**	**31%**	**35%**	**38%**	**42%**	**31%**	**33%**	**31%**	**36%**	**31%**	**38%**	**30%**	**28%**	**37%**
Homemade foods	28	27	31	24	27	27	37	26	25	26	31	26	30	23	26	31
Frozen homemade	4	—	1	3	6	10	4	3	5	3	4	2	4	2	1	5
Other	3	—	1	4	3	5	5	2	3	3	4	3	4	5	3	3
Frozen (net)	**32**	**21**	**29**	**33**	**36**	**37**	**31**	**30**	**35**	**27**	**34**	**34**	**28**	**39**	**37**	**30**
Frozen foods from the freezer	27	21	24	26	31	31	26	25	30	22	29	30	23	37	32	25
Frozen dinners prepared in the oven	6	2	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	8	5
Take-out (net)	**20**	**21**	**23**	**22**	**19**	**11**	**16**	**22**	**20**	**24**	**17**	**22**	**23**	**20**	**21**	**18**
Take-out/delivery from restaurant	12	13	15	12	8	6	11	15	12	16	9	13	17	11	10	10
Take-out from supermarket counter/food store	8	8	7	8	11	6	6	7	8	7	9	9	6	9	12	8
Canned foods	15	15	15	12	15	12	21	14	15	14	16	13	10	16	13	18
Packaged mixes	8	15	9	10	5	6	3	8	6	10	8	8	10	5	8	9
Pre-packaged heat-and-serve foods	7	6	10	10	4	6	2	10	5	12	5	9	15	6	7	5
Microwave dinners/entrees	2	—	2	1	4	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	—	1	2	1

NOTE: "Other Take-out," "Other," and "Don't Know" not included

Methods used most often by the highest percentage of respondents in preparing meat for a quick dinner are pan frying and baking. Households with children and younger respondents are most prone to fry meat for these quick preparation occasions.

The two most popular methods of preparing meat for a quick dinner are frying it in a pan (36%) and cooking it in an oven (33%). Other methods include the following:

Microwaving	16%
Barbecuing/grilling	13
Cooking on top of stove	8
Broiling	4

When young children are present in a household a higher percentage of respondents fry meat for a quick dinner. For example, while 41% of those with non-teens fry meat most often, that's true of only 32% of those with no children and 32% of those with teens. Those with teens are the most prone to cook meat in the microwave (20%) and to barbecue/grill (15%).

Age dictates the method of cooking and this choice may be affected by increased health concerns as adults grow older. For example, while 40% of the 25-34 year olds fry meat in a pan for a quick dinner, only 33% of the 45-54 year olds agree. Conversely, 41% of the 45-54 year olds bake meat versus 29% of the 25-34 year olds.

TABLE 40

HOW MEAT IS PREPARED FOR A QUICK DINNER

Q. 43A: And how would you prepare the meat?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	How Meat is Prepared Fry it in Pan	Cook it in the Oven	Place it in the Microwave	Barbecue/Grill	Cook on Top of Stove	Broil
(Those who prepare meat for dinner)	(383)	36%	33	16	13	8	4
Children in household							
Yes	(192)	39%	31	16	11	8	2
Teens	(87)	32%	31	20	15	7	3
Non-teens	(138)	41%	33	12	11	8	1
No	(191)	32%	36	16	14	7	7
Age							
Less than 25	(22)	55%	18	14	14	5	5
25-34	(89)	40%	29	16	13	10	2
35-44	(100)	32%	31	17	14	6	2
45-54	(64)	33%	41	19	13	6	5
55-64	(54)	35%	44	13	11	4	6
65 and over	(49)	24%	33	12	12	12	12
Working/non-working females							
Working females	(174)	36%	33	15	12	8	4
Working females with children under 12	(74)	38%	38	12	8	8	3
Working females with teen(s)	(50)	32%	38	16	14	6	2
Working females with no children	(72)	35%	29	17	15	7	7
Non-working females	(149)	36%	33	17	11	8	7

NOTE: "Other" and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mention

DINNER PREPARATION BASICS

On the average, respondents spent about one hour preparing dinner.

Respondents spent an average of 55.74 minutes preparing the last dinner. Differences are evident by age. Those taking the most shortcuts seem to be the younger baby boomers (25-34) whose lives may be busy with the demands of younger children. They spent an average* of 51.38 minutes (the shortest time) compared with those 55-64 who prepared this meal for 60.10 minutes (the longest stretch). The same pattern is revealed when looking at households with children (non-teen households spent 55.02 minutes, lower than teen households at 60.33 minutes). Interestingly, though, those in households with no children spent a shorter amount of time (54.45 minutes) than did those with children (57.09 minutes). As might be expected, working females with children under 12 took the shortest time of all working/non-working females (46.53 minutes) preparing dinner. Weekend meals (58.01 minutes) took longer to fix than those during the week (53.57 minutes).

While time spent on the evening meal declines as income rises, even the highest income respondents spent nearly an hour on dinner. (Those making less than $20,000 worked at dinner 69.40 minutes; those making $50,000 or more spent 49.96 minutes.)

Those in the South spent the most time in dinner preparation (60.72 minutes) while those in the North Central region spent the shortest time (50.50 minutes).

* All future references to minutes spent preparing dinner are based on mean scores.

TABLE 41

TIME SPENT PREPARING DINNER

Q. 29: And, about how much time was spent preparing dinner?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Time Spent Preparing Dinner (in minutes) Less than 15	15-30	31-45	46 or more	Mean
Total	(750)	3%	36	18	42	55.74
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	2%	33	15	48	57.02
25-34	(196)	4%	39	20	37	51.38
35-44	(177)	3%	31	20	46	55.70
45-54	(121)	2%	40	17	40	58.11
55-64	(97)	6%	36	14	42	60.10
65 and over	(95)	1%	37	16	45	58.46
Children in household						
Yes	(365)	3%	33	19	45	57.09
Teens	(153)	1%	37	18	44	60.33
Non-teens	(278)	4%	31	21	45	55.02
No	(385)	3%	39	17	39	54.45
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	4%	39	19	37	48.84
Working females with children under 12	(124)	6%	35	21	38	46.53
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	1%	37	20	41	54.81
Working females with no children	(156)	3%	42	19	34	47.49
Non-working females	(311)	4%	33	18	44	60.26
Last meal eaten together at home						
Weekday	(383)	2%	37	19	40	53.57
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	4%	35	16	44	58.01
Sunday	(78)	3%	33	13	51	65.55
Income						
Less than $20,000	(118)	1%	36	13	50	69.40
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	3%	36	18	42	53.81
$50,000 or more	(126)	3%	37	22	36	49.96
Region						
Northeast	(118)	2%	36	14	46	55.26
North Central	(254)	5%	38	19	37	50.50
South	(230)	2%	32	20	45	60.72
West	(144)	2%	40	14	43	55.59

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

Recipe usage is especially prevalent among suburbanites, those with higher incomes and in younger to mid-age households.

About one out of every five respondents say they used a recipe in preparing the dinner (22%). The incidence of recipe usage is greater in suburban areas (27% in the suburbs compared to 19% in the city and 20% in rural areas) and climbs gradually as respondent income increases (from 14% among those in the less than $20,000 category to 27% among those making $50,000 or more). Recipe usage peaks with the 35-44 age group (29% used a recipe) and ranges from 21%-25% among other groups under 55.

TABLE 42

USED RECIPE IN PREPARING DINNER

Q. 30: Were any recipes used in preparing the dinner?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Recipe Used	
		Yes	No
Total	(750)	22%	78
Metro/non-metro			
City	(272)	19%	81
Suburb	(267)	27%	73
Rural	(202)	20%	80
Income			
Less than $20,000	(118)	14%	86
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	24%	76
$50,000 or more	(126)	27%	73
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	25%	75
25-34	(196)	21%	79
35-44	(177)	29%	71
45-54	(121)	22%	78
55-64	(97)	16%	84
65 and over	(95)	18%	82
Working/non-working females			
Working females	(329)	23%	77
Working females with children under 12	(124)	20%	80
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	26%	74
Working females with no children	(156)	25%	75
Non-working females	(311)	20%	80
Children in household			
Yes	(365)	24%	76
Teens	(153)	24%	76
Non-teens	(278)	23%	77
No	(385)	21%	79

Eight of ten respondents own a microwave and a majority have a freezer separate from the refrigerator and/or a dishwasher.

Household penetration of microwave ovens is 83% among respondents. It is even higher among two mid-age groups. Eighty-eight percent of those 35-44 and 87% of those 45-54 own a microwave. As might be expected, the incidence of microwave ownership increases as incomes rise, with 90% of those in the $50,000 and over category owning one. Ownership is in the 83%-86% range across the country, except in the Northeast where 76% of respondents own a microwave. Suburban (86%) and rural (87%) respondents are more likely to own this type of oven than are the city dwellers (79%).

Freezers separate from the refrigerator are found in a majority of respondent households (58%). Those 35 and over are the most likely to own a separate freezer, possibly because they are the most prone to be or have been in a household with growing children. For example, while only 44% of the 25-34 year olds own one, that is true of 67% of the 35-44 year olds. Not surprisingly, the larger the household, the more likely that ownership of a separate freezer will be found in that household (e.g., 66% of those with four or more household members say they own one but only 54% of those with two members do). As might be expected, those in rural areas are far more prone to own a separate freezer (72%) than are their more urban counterparts (52% in the city and 55% in the suburbs).

Fifty-eight percent of the survey participants own a dishwasher. Ownership is highest among those in the 35 and over range (e.g., 66% of those 35-44 own one compared to 45% of those 25-34). Again, income plays a major role. While only 31% of those with incomes of less than $20,000 own a dishwasher, 83% of respondents with incomes of $50,000 or more own one. Ownership of dishwashers does have a regional pattern, with a higher percentage owning these in the South (62%) and West (63%) than in the North Central (54%) or Northeast (49%). Residents of the suburbs (65%) are the most likely to have a dishwasher.

TABLE 43

HOME APPLIANCES OWNERSHIP

Q. B7: Do you own any of the following household appliances...

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Those Who Own the Appliance Microwave	Freezer Separate from the Refrigerator	Dishwasher
Total	(750)	83%	58	58
Age				
Less than 25	(52)	77%	25	29
25-34	(196)	82%	44	45
35-44	(177)	88%	67	66
45-54	(121)	87%	70	70
55-64	(97)	84%	64	68
65 and over	(95)	77%	67	59
Income				
Less than $20,000	(118)	67%	49	31
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	86%	58	57
$50,000 or more	(126)	90%	61	83
Region				
Northeast	(118)	76%	43	49
North Central	(254)	86%	61	54
South	(230)	83%	62	62
West	(144)	85%	59	63
Number of people in household				
Two	(328)	80%	54	55
Three	(188)	86%	56	60
Four or more	(234)	85%	66	59
Metro/non-metro				
City	(272)	79%	52	56
Suburb	(267)	86%	55	65
Rural	(202)	87%	72	51

NOTE: "None" and "Don't Know" not included
Multiple mentions

Eight of ten say the female head decided on the menu; about one in ten agree that the male head did so.

In the vast majority of households (81%), it is the female head who decided what to serve for dinner; 12% say it was the male head. The female head (87%) is the most likely to have decided on what to eat when meals are prepared in the household nearly everyday, versus those in households where meals are prepared several times a week (71%).

Age is a factor to some degree. Those under 25 register the lowest percentage of female decision-making. Only 54% of those under 25 say the female head decided what to eat. Compare that to 83% of the 25-34 year olds. Note too, one in five respondents (19%) say the male head decided on the evening fare for those under 25 and for the older boomer group (35-44).

The male head of household also is more likely a decision-maker for weekday meals (14%) than weekend meals (11%).

Decision-making is affected by regionality. Respondents in the Northeast (86%) are the most prone to agreeing that the female head made the decision, and the percentages drop steadily across the country—North Central (85%), South (81%) and West (73%). In the West, nearly one in five (19%) agree that the male head of household chose the menu.

Suburban (84%) and rural (82%) respondents are more likely to say the female head picked the meal components than are those living in cities (76%).

TABLE 44

PRIMARY MEMBER WHO DECIDED WHAT TO EAT

Q. 34: Who was the main person who decided what to eat?

		Primary Member Who Decided What to Eat	
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Female Head	Male Head
Total	(750)	81%	12%
Frequency of meal preparation			
Nearly everyday	(464)	87%	8
Several times a week	(262)	71%	20
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	54%	19
25-34	(196)	83%	10
35-44	(177)	78%	19
45-54	(121)	89%	6
55-64	(97)	78%	13
65 and over	(95)	88%	8
Working/non-working females			
Working females	(329)	86%	8
Non-working females	(311)	88%	7
Last meal eaten together at home			
Weekday	(383)	79%	14
Fri./Sat./Sun.	(364)	83%	11
Sunday	(78)	81%	12
Region			
Northeast	(118)	86%	7
North Central	(254)	85%	11
South	(230)	81%	11
West	(144)	73%	19
Metro/non-metro			
City	(272)	76%	15
Suburb	(267)	84%	9
Rural	(202)	82%	13

NOTE: "Other" household members not included

While the decision on what to eat is made most often by the female head (see Table 44) the male household head and children also have input.

One in five say the male household head also helped decide what to eat; eight percent say children were involved in decision-making.

In households where eating together is a very high priority, the likelihood that the male head and children join in the decision increases. For example, of those who say the evening meal is very important 22% also report that the male head helped decide what to eat while that is true of 18% of respondents who considered the meal somewhat important.

The highest percentage of male involvement is in the Northeast, where 25% report the male helped decide; the lowest (18%) is found in the North Central states. The highest percentage (11%) report children's input in the North Central states.

Surprisingly, the working status of women doesn't seem to affect the percentages of male heads with input. Twenty percent say males helped decide what to eat in homes with working females; 19% did the same in households with non-working females.

Not surprisingly, the percentage saying children add to the decision rises among households with working women and children. For example, 15% of working females with children under 12 say these children shared in the dinner decision-making; that's true of 16% of those with teens. As might be expected a higher percentage of those in the boomer years (25-34 and 35-44) report decision-making from children. For example, 15% of the 35-44 year olds report that children helped decide what to eat.

Income is a determinant in decision-making. Those making $20,000 to less than $50,000 (22%) and those making $50,000 or more (21%) say the male helped to decide what to eat, but that's only 13% for those in households where income is less than $20,000.

TABLE 45

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER(S) WHO HELPED DECIDE WHAT TO EAT

Q. 35: And who else, if anyone, helped to decide?

		Other Household Member(s) Who Helped Decide What to Eat				
				Children		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Male Head	Female Head	Total	Teens	Non-Teens
Total	(750)	21%	7	8	3	5
Importance of eating together						
Very important	(499)	22%	6	9	3	6
Somewhat important	(208)	18%	7	6	3	3
Region						
Northeast	(118)	25%	3	8	4	6
North Central	(254)	18%	5	11	4	7
South	(230)	21%	5	7	3	3
West	(144)	21%	14	5	1	5
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	20%	5	9	4	6
Working females with children under 12	(124)	19%	6	15	2	15
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	22%	2	16	15	4
Working females with no children	(156)	21%	6	—	—	—
Non-working females	(311)	19%	5	7	3	5
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	17%	8	6	—	6
25-34	(196)	24%	5	10	3	8
35-44	(177)	17%	8	15	7	10
45-54	(121)	23%	4	9	7	3
55-64	(97)	14%	7	—	—	—
65 and over	(95)	27%	6	—	—	—
Income						
Less than $20,000	(118)	13%	6	6	2	6
$20,000 to less than $50,000	(409)	22%	7	10	4	7
$50,000 or more	(126)	21%	8	6	2	3

NOTE: "Other" household members not included
Multiple mentions

Although women are far more likely to have prepared the meal, in one out of ten households the primary food preparer is a male.

In most respondent households (85%), it is the female head who prepared the last dinner served at home. In households where people eat dinner together everyday, the incidence of the female head preparing the meal was even greater (92% compared to 76% in homes where respondents eat dinner together only several times a week).

In rural areas the female head is more often the one who put the dinner together (89% compared to 82% in the city and 86% in the suburbs).

As might be expected, a higher percentage of non-working female heads (95%) prepared the dinner themselves than did working women (89%), but both figures indicate a high degree of female involvement.

Those with younger children are the most likely to share the cooking. Twelve percent of working females with children under 12 say the male head cooked the last dinner. Thirteen percent of all those with non-teens did so.

Survey respondents in younger age groups tend to name the male head as primary meal preparer more than those who are older (e.g., 15% of those 35-44 say the male head cooked but only 5% of the 45-54 year olds agree).

TABLE 46

PRIMARY MEAL PREPARER

Q. 32: Which one of these people was the primary person who prepared the last dinner?

(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Primary Meal Preparer Female Head	Male Head
Total	(750)	85%	10%
Frequency of meal preparation			
Nearly everyday	(464)	91	6
Several times a week	(262)	76	17
Metro/non-metro			
City	(272)	82	12
Suburb	(267)	86	10
Rural	(202)	89	7
Working/non-working females			
Working females	(329)	89	6
Working females with children under 12	(124)	84	12
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	94	4
Working females with no children	(156)	90	3
Non-working females	(311)	95	2
Children in household			
Yes	(365)	85	12
Teens	(153)	88	8
Non-teens	(278)	83	13
No	(385)	86	8
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	75	10
25-34	(196)	84	11
35-44	(177)	84	15
45-54	(121)	92	5
55-64	(97)	86	7
65 and over	(95)	88	9

NOTE: "Other" household members and "Don't Know" not included

In about one-third of households another member(s) helped prepare dinner; about one half of these were the male household heads.

Thirty-one percent of respondents name another household member as a helper in dinner preparation. Half (51%) of these are the male head of household. Men are the most likely helpmates when cooking is done several times a week (54% of men help), when respondents live in a suburb (53%) and when there's a non-working female (51%) in the household.

In 28% of households children help.

TABLE 47

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER(S) WHO HELPED PREPARE THE DINNER

Q. 33: And who, if anyone, helped prepare the dinner?

		Other Household Member(s) Who Helped Prepare the Dinner				
				Children		
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**Male Head**	**Female Head**	**Total**	**Teens**	**Non-Teens**
(Those households where other members helped prepare dinner, equal to 31% of total base)	(229)	51%	17	28	13	16
Frequency of meal preparation						
Nearly everyday	(112)	45%	12	38	17	22
Several times a week	(104)	54%	24	18	10	10
Metro/non-metro						
City	(86)	49%	23	20	7	13
Suburb	(87)	53%	14	26	14	14
Rural	(54)	52%	12	44	20	24
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(102)	46%	16	27	16	14
Non-working females	(70)	51%	9	34	13	21
Region						
Northeast	(35)	57%	9	29	11	17
North Central	(64)	53%	16	38	17	22
South	(78)	51%	17	23	17	6
West	(51)	43%	22	24	4	22

NOTE: "Other" household members not included.

In two of three households the female head sets the table; the male head performed this task in one of six households.

In the vast majority of cases, it is the female head of the house (65%) who set the table. The male head is mentioned less frequently (15%). Sixteen percent say children took on this responsibility.

The female is most likely to have set the table in older households (72% for those 45-54 versus 62% for those 25-34). Those in younger age groups are more prone to share the task (e.g. 55% of those in the 25-34 age group say the female participated versus 84% of those 65 and over). As might be expected, those in boomer age groups are more prone to share the task with children. For example, among those 35-44, 32% say children set the table; the percentage is 22% among those 25-34.

Table-setting habits vary by region too. For example, respondents in the South and North Central regions are the most likely to agree the female head set the table (69%), while those in the West (56%) are the least likely. Children are the most likely to have set table in the North Central states (18%).

TABLE 48

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS WHO SET THE TABLE

Q. 36: Who set the table?

		Household Members Who Set the Table				
				Children		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Female Head	Male Head	Total	Non-Teens	Teens
Total	(750)	65%	15	16	7	10
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	58%	17	2	—	2
25-34	(196)	62%	15	22	5	18
35-44	(177)	55%	12	32	17	18
45-54	(121)	72%	14	10	9	2
55-64	(97)	67%	13	2	1	1
65 and over	(95)	84%	20	1	—	1
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	64%	13	18	10	10
Non-working females	(311)	74%	9	13	5	9
Region						
Northeast	(118)	63%	17	12	6	6
North Central	(254)	69%	15	18	7	13
South	(230)	69%	10	16	10	7
West	(144)	56%	20	15	3	13

NOTE: "Other" household members not included
Multiple mentions

Seven of ten say the female head cleared away the dishes; that's true of the male head in one of three households.

Sixty-eight percent agree that the female head cleared away dinner dishes; 34% say the male head cleared. Twenty percent say children cleared. A lower percentage of females cleared in younger households (e.g., 64% for those 25-34) than is true in older households (e.g., 71% for those 55-64). As would be expected children are more apt to clear dishes in boomer households. Almost one of three of those 25-34 say children cleared; 37% of those 35-44 agree.

Interestingly, working females (71%) are as likely to have cleared as non-working women (72%).

Regionally there also are differences. Those in the North Central are more prone to have had the female head clear the dishes (73%) than are those in the South (67%), West (64%) or Northeast (64%). Children are the most likely to have cleared in the South (21%) and least likely in the Northeast (18%).

TABLE 49

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS WHO CLEARED AWAY THE DISHES AFTER THE MEAL

Q. 37: And who cleared away the dishes after the meal?

		Household Members Who Cleared Away the Dishes After the Meal				
				Children		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Female Head	Male Head	Total	Non-Teens	Teens
Total	(750)	68%	34	20	10	13
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	63%	21	12	2	10
25-34	(196)	64%	41	26	6	22
35-44	(177)	63%	31	37	21	21
45-54	(121)	73%	28	13	12	2
55-64	(97)	71%	32	—	5	3
65 and over	(95)	76%	44	1	—	1
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	71%	32	19	12	11
Non-working females	(311)	72%	30	19	8	13
Region						
Northeast	(118)	64%	34	18	8	10
North Central	(254)	73%	33	19	8	13
South	(230)	67%	33	21	14	11
West	(144)	64%	40	20	6	17

NOTE: "Other" household members not included
Multiple mentions

The female head is the one who washed the dishes and/or loaded the dishwasher in three of four households; the male did so in one of five households.

Seventy-three percent of respondents say the female head washed dishes and/or loaded the dishwasher. The same is true for one of five male heads and 10% say children took on this task. The older the respondent, the more likely it is that the female will have performed this clean-up task. For example, 79% of those 65 and over say they washed and/or loaded compared with 69% of the 25-34 year olds. The highest percentage who say children did this job are those 35-44 (18%) and 25-34 (13%).

There is some difference between working and non-working women. Those not working are more prone to have washed/loaded (79%) than are those working (73%).

Differences are found regionally, with those in the West (68%) the least likely to name the female head for this chore while those in the North Central are the most likely.

TABLE 50

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS WHO WASHED THE DISHES AND/OR LOADED THE DISHWASHER

Q. 38: And who washed the dishes and/or loaded the dishwasher?

		Household Members Who Washed the Dishes and/or Loaded the Dishwasher				
				Children		
(Table Reads Across)	(Base)	Female Head	Male Head	Total	Non-Teens	Teens
Total	(750)	73%	20	10	6	5
Age						
Less than 25	(52)	65%	12	6	2	4
25-34	(196)	69%	23	13	5	9
35-44	(177)	69%	18	18	12	8
45-54	(121)	78%	18	7	7	1
55-64	(97)	76%	19	3	2	1
65 and over	(95)	79%	26	1	—	1
Working/non-working females						
Working females	(329)	73%	19	9	7	3
Non-working females	(311)	79%	14	10	5	5
Region						
Northeast	(118)	70%	21	5	3	2
North Central	(254)	76%	20	11	5	6
South	(230)	74%	17	11	9	3
West	(144)	68%	24	10	5	7

NOTE: "Other" household members not included
Multiple mentions

Respondents are split about half and half when asked if all members left the dinner table at the same time or some left sooner than others.

Fifty-two percent of survey participants say all household members left the dinner table at the same time; 47% acknowledge some member(s) left sooner. Those in younger age groups are the most likely to have experienced some member(s) leaving sooner (56% of the 35-44 year olds say that was the case versus 23% of those 65 and over), but this is very likely also a function of household size, since younger households most likely include children. The percentages on household size and presence of children bear this out. For instance, while 65% of those in two-person households left at the same time, only 35% of those with four or more did so. Similarly, while 63% of respondents with no children left at the same time, only 40% of those with children agree this is the case. The same pattern is true for working women with children.

There are some differences by region. Those in the West (57%) are most prone to leave the table at the same time, while only 49% of those in the North Central states agree.

TABLE 51

LEAVING THE TABLE AT THE END OF THE MEAL

Q. 39: At the end of the meal, did everyone leave the table at the same time, or did someone leave sooner than others?

		At the End of the Meal, Everyone Left the Table ...	
(Table Reads Across)	**(Base)**	**All at the Same Time**	**Some Sooner**
Total	(750)	52%	47
Age			
Less than 25	(52)	42%	58
25-34	(196)	45%	54
35-44	(177)	44%	56
45-54	(121)	57%	42
55-64	(97)	56%	43
65 and over	(95)	75%	23
Number of people in household			
Two	(328)	65%	34
Three	(188)	51%	49
Four or more	(234)	35%	63
Children in household			
Yes	(365)	40%	59
Teens	(153)	44%	55
Non-teens	(278)	37%	62
No	(385)	63%	36
Working/non-working females			
Working females	(329)	50%	49
Working females with children under 12	(124)	34%	65
Working females with teen(s)	(82)	44%	55
Working females with no children	(156)	63%	37
Non-working females	(311)	54%	45
Regions			
Northeast	(118)	50%	49
North Central	(254)	49%	50
South	(230)	53%	46
West	(144)	57%	42

NOTE: "Don't Know" not included

Methodology

The data for this survey were collected from 750 interviews conducted between January 20 and February 4, 1989 by Total Research Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey. Respondents were selected for the study by means of a national probability sample of those living in the continental United States. Survey participants were interviewed by telephone and each household was screened by the following four criteria to qualify respondents:

- Two or more people living full-time in the home (incidence reported at 71% in this study).
- Household members eat dinner together at least three times per week (incidence reported at 84% in this study).
- Respondent prepares main meal or shares the responsibility equally with another household member.
- Respondent prepares dinner for the household at least once a month.

Sampling Variation

With any study the results are subject to sampling variation, i.e., the difference between survey results and those that would be gathered by studying the entire population. In general, sampling variation is less when the size of the sample is large and the sample result approaches 0% or 100%, rather than being in a middle range. The following tables show the approximate range of sampling variation between several groups described in this study. For example, in Table 1, while 65% of respondents with children consider eating together "very important," the same is true of 68% of those without children. There are 365 repondents with children and 385 respondents without youngsters. The minimum needed sampling tolerance is 7% and since it is less than the 10% differential between those with and without children who responded this difference is not statistically significant. Conversely, 64% (373 survey participants) who are 25-44 say that eating together is "very important," compared wth 72% of those 45 and over. The sampling tolerance is 6.9% and since there is an 8% differential between the two percentages, this difference is statistically significant.

Approximate Sampling Tolerances (+/-) at 95% Confidence Level
To Use in Evaluating Difference
Between Two Percentage Results

Frequency of meal preparations	**10% or 90%**	**20% or 80%**	**30% or 70%**	**40% or 60%**	**50%**
Nearly everyday/several times a week (464) vs. (262)	4.5%	6.1%	6.9%	7.4%	7.6%
Children in household: yes/no (365) vs. (385)	4.3%	5.3%	6.6%	7.0%	7.2%
Age: 25-44/45 or more (373) vs. (313)	4.5%	6.0%	6.9%	7.4%	7.5%
Working female/non-working female (329) vs .(311)	4.7%	6.2%	7.1%	7.6%	7.8%
Importance of eating together: very/somewhat (499) vs. (208)	4.9%	6.5%	7.4%	7.9%	8.1%
Number of people in household: Two/Three or more (328) vs. (422)	4.3%	5.8%	6.6%	7.1%	7.2%
Teens in household/no teens in household (153) vs. (278)	5.9%	7.9%	9.0%	9.7%	9.9%

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS: 1989

(Base = 750)

Sex	**Total**
Male	15%
Female	85
Race	
White	92%
Black	6
Oriental/Asian/Pacific Island	1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	*
Other	1
Don't know/refused	1
Age	
Under 25	7%
25-34	26
35-44	24
45-54	16
55-64	13
65 and over	13
Refused	2
Mean (Years)	**43.84**

NOTE: * = less than 0.5%

Employment	**Total**
Works Outside Home	55%
Full-time	42
Part-time	12
Does Not Work Outside Home	45
Spouse Employment	
Works Outside Home	76%
Full-time	70
Part-time	6
Don't know	1
Does Not Work Outside Home	23
Don't Know	1
Household Income	
Less than $20,000	16%
$20,000 - $24,999	11
$25,000 - $29,999	14
$30,000 - $39,999	17
$40,000 - $49,999	12
$50,000 - $74,999	12
$75,000 - $99,000	3
$100,000 or more	2
Don't Know	4
Refused	9
Mean Total Annual Household Income	**$38,000**

Religion	**Total**
Protestant	62%
Catholic	29
Jewish	1
Christian	1
Other	1
None	5
Refused	1
Marital Status	
Married	83%
Single	8
Separated	2
Divorced	5
Widowed	3
Education	
Some Elementary School	*
Completed Elementary School	1%
Some High School	9
Completed High School	37
Business or Technical School	5
Some College	20
Completed College	21
Post Graduate	6
Don't Know/Refused	*

NOTE: * = less than 0.5%

Frequency of Household Eating Dinner Together

Three	10%
Four	11
Five	15
Six	9
Seven	56
Mean (Days per week)	5.89

Meal Preparation

Respondent Prepared Meals Most of the Time	83%
Prepared Equally with Other Household Member(s)	17

Frequency of Dinner Preparation By Respondent

Nearly Everyday	62%
Several Times a Week	35
Once a Week	3
Once or Twice a Month	*

Last Day of the Week Household Members Had Dinner Together at Home

Monday	10%
Tuesday	11
Wednesday	14
Thursday	16
Friday	26
Saturday	12
Sunday	10
Don't Know	*

NOTE: * = Less than 0.5%

Region	Total
Northeast	16%
North Central	34
South	31
West	19
Not Reported	1
Metro/Non-Metro	
City	36%
Suburb	36
Rural	27
Don't Know	1
Ownership Status	
Own	78%
Rent	22
Refused	*
Household Size	
Two	44%
Three	25
Four	19
Five or more	12
Mean (Members Per Household)	**2.99**

NOTE: * = less than 0.5%